



**COMMUNITY  
COHESION  
CONFERENCE  
REPORTS**

# Promoting Community Cohesion Through Schools

Held at the Barbican Centre on Monday 26 November 2007, Runnymede's one-day conference was attended by up to 250 representatives from schools, local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and universities. This overview by **Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard** prefaces coverage of the three principal speakers and the presentations and responses noted at the four workshops.



Michelynn Lafêche,  
Director, Runnymede Trust



Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Runnymede  
Transitions Programme Director

Funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government, this event set out to provide delegates with good practice for implementing the new Duty to Promote Community Cohesion, introduced as part of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and effective from 1 September 2007. It also, by virtue of the wide range of speakers and panelists taking part, was an endeavour by Runnymede to foster debate about community cohesion, its relationship to race equality and to identify some of the larger narratives surrounding the community cohesion concept and what it means for schools attempting to meet the new duty.

One of the positive aspects of encouraging schools to promote community cohesion among their pupil bodies and wider communities is that together with citizenship curricula this can go some way towards ensuring children and young people learn about the diversity that exists within society, particularly when they are being educated in schools where

little diversity exists. Ultimately, however, and as we noted in our work on *School Choice and Ethnic Segregation*,<sup>1</sup> segregated schools do exist, be they schools with a pupil population that is over 90% BME or 90% White British (though it is the latter set of schools that are clearly in the majority in the UK). Engaging with government priorities about increasing cohesion is made more difficult by the existence of segregated schools, and school choice policy and practice that effectively allows parents to avoid schools with pupil populations they dislike. We therefore wanted conference discussions to explore not only this challenge that choice poses for cohesion more generally, but the 'fit' between cohesion and race equality more specifically.

## General Themes

The conference began with a set of presentations from pupils who had recently participated in a School Linking project across two very different secondary schools in Leicester - Moat Community College and St Paul's Catholic School. This provided an important context for the day's proceedings, of the centrality of this kind of peer-led activity by those young people who will most immediately experience the outcomes of cohesion initiatives in their schools. It contrasted somewhat with the nature of the speeches and debates that took place in plenary sessions throughout the rest of the day. Excluding the workshop in which teachers from the Leicester School Linking project and young

people from Aik Saath in Slough provided further important blueprints for community cohesion projects that had worked, speakers raised issues that did not look so specifically at what was necessary to achieve good community cohesion work but attempted to derive some clarity as to what community cohesion was, and was for, and this theme dominated a great deal of general discussion.

Early on in the conference's speeches and plenary discussions some participants gave suggestions as to what they felt community cohesion should represent - Trevor Phillips (Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission) noting how important the concept is in a world of constantly changing patterns of migration, and Sir Keith Ajegbo (Institute of Community Cohesion) suggesting that schools were the ideal place to have a debate about cohesion - and indeed acknowledging its overall necessity. Others felt, however, that there were additional issues within the sphere of education that made the notion of community cohesion difficult to achieve or indeed incompatible with existing rhetoric. Tony Breslin (Citizenship Foundation), unlike Keith Ajegbo, felt that the focus on raising educational standards within schools did little to create an image of the cohesive school. He noted that the more educationally successful some pupils became in view of the drive to improve examination scores, the more likely this was to result in creating an even more excluded minority of those who were not

1. D. Weekes-Bernard (2007) *School Choice and Ethnic Segregation: Educational Decision-Making among Black and Minority Ethnic Parents*. London: the Runnymede Trust.



The conference hall just before the start of the conference

similarly achieving well. High achievement for all does not by its nature create success for all and hence prevents inclusion. Placing inclusion at the centre of policy, however, would promote all-round achievement, in his view.

Andrew Stunell MP suggested that choice within education, as currently dominating government policy on raising standards, could only work in schools where there was a surplus of places available to pupils, which again presented difficulties for attempts to focus on cohesion in schools. Though he did feel that choice was generally good for the individual, as it provided a wealth of opportunity and access to good schooling, it was rationed by income.

There was no agreement that cohesion was a distraction from standards and Keith Ajegbo noted that good leadership within schools would certainly assist in ensuring that they could meet this duty well. Generally there was some agreement that a duty to promote community cohesion was important and necessary. Baroness Sayeeda Warsi commented that many schools had been achieving good cohesion for some time, but noted that there was a relationship between cohesion and good achievement. Cohesion for her reflected equality of opportunity, high aspirations and ensuring that those new to the country were able to access the curriculum through the acquisition of good language skills.

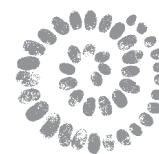
### **Bound by the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion**

The duty to promote community cohesion is imposed directly upon school governing bodies in maintained schools in England. Whilst others in local areas and in local authorities can provide *support*, ultimately it is only schools that will be monitored for their abilities to meet the duty well and this raised some general concern among both speakers and conference delegates.

In a discussion raised later in the afternoon, Steve Sinnott, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, saw the duty as being of immense importance, though he agreed with earlier comments on the tension between choice and cohesion, and felt that local authorities should also have also been bound by the duty - a view raised in audience discussion too. There is clearly an expectation that local authorities will provide support

to schools in any activities they develop around cohesion. Jim Knight MP in his closing speech referred to this support. He noted that authorities and schools responding to high levels of migration in their local areas would benefit from programmes to support the children of migrants both in terms of educational progress and with budgetary assistance to individual schools where relevant. The point raised in later debate, however, reflected a wider anxiety at the pressure placed on schools to meet the duty - inspection by Ofsted is due to begin in September 2008 and schools will have received formal toolkits, produced by the Institute of Community Cohesion, only in April of that year. Imposing the duty on local authorities, however, given that they are in a good position to provide wide support for the schools they have responsibility for; facilitating links and allocating resources, was seen as essential to alleviate the pressure on individual schools, and indeed teachers, to do cohesion work well.

Focusing solely on schools not only creates pressure for them as institutions but also ignores the support and indeed the challenges from within surrounding areas and communities. As the work of Aik Saath, a peer-led organisation in Slough working on issues to do with conflict resolution among diverse communities, has demonstrated, support for schools in various



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Delegates at registration time in the morning



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areas can be found and drawn upon. Thus the announcement by Jim Knight that a new 'matching' website has been set up to enable schools to find partners with whom to work *must* include the important work such small organisations currently conduct, often with very little by way of financial resources or publicity. The two Leicester schools, when discussing their involvement in a School Linking project, mentioned the benefits gained from linking to very different institutions, but the frustration of having ultimately achieved only 4 full days of linking work due to limited resources. As Claire Alexander notes in her workshop report, for work of this kind to be both sustainable and meaningful to the children involved, long-term, dedicated and ring-fenced budgeting for cohesion activities is essential. Dimitrina Petrova, Director of the Equal Rights Trust, noted in her workshop presentation that the cohesion related activities currently on offer for children do little to facilitate long-term friendships, despite the clear wishes of parents for it to do so. Given that Andrew Stunell MP raised concerns very early on in the conference about the necessity for the cohesion agenda to look broadly at the issue of ethnicity and be fully cognisant of its impact on White British children, Dimitrina's comments that cohesion work needs to move



Samir Shah and Trevor Phillips

beyond the confines of the school towards the children and, more importantly, the families of those who are White British, have great resonance, particularly as she felt that here, rather than within the schools themselves perhaps, is where the cohesion challenge truly exists.

### What Does the Duty Mean?

General anxieties about what it is that schools will be expected to do to meet their responsibilities under the new duty were reiterated throughout the conference, despite assurances made during the speeches of both Jim Knight MP and Parmjit Dhanda MP as they outlined government commitment to promoting community cohesion across local authorities and within schools. Delegates expressed a wish that more mention could have been made of the differences between primary and secondary schools in meeting the duty, or key advice

offered by the DCSF about implementation. Although Jim Knight had confirmed the availability of a toolkit from mid-2008 to provide additional assistance to schools, until the resource appears its full usefulness cannot be gauged.

References were made to the clear difference between schools based in urban areas and those more remotely situated, alongside a sense from some delegates that attention in the main speeches focused on those schools with very little evident diversity in the pupil population without also acknowledging that schools with more ethnically mixed populations require discussion. DCSF guidance to schools does make clear reference to the importance of 'localism' and Parmjit Dhanda's speech highlighted the report by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion which noted that '*cohesion is something which is built locally*'. However, these points made by delegates express how the tensions that exist between priorities for cohesion and the existence of schools and areas in which diversity is limited, increase the difficulties for policymaking and implementation in this area for those tasked with adapting and adopting it.

Discussion about the practical implementation of the duty was raised in the workshops. Absorbing new migrants into local government areas is not a smooth or easy process and there was some dissatisfaction with the lack of leadership from government for authorities and



Young people from Moat Community College & St Paul's Catholic School

schools to do this. Generally, there was agreement that teachers were somewhat ill-equipped to promote diversity in schools. Comments raised by Patrick Roach and Jennifer Moses from the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), and echoed in early comments from both Andrew Stunell MP and Sir Keith Ajegbo in relation to citizenship, noted that the way teachers from diverse backgrounds currently experienced their employment in schools was a clear indicator of how thoroughly those schools would embrace the cohesion duty and indeed how well they regarded their BME pupils.

Some workshop debates also raised the lack of clarity, as in the guidance presented for schools, about what the *outcomes* of the duty would be for children. This lack of definition could then mean the duty being implemented by schools without real conviction, and giving rise to a series of activities that would enable boxes to be ticked once the Ofsted inspections come into force in September 2008. Since the afternoon panel sessions included the presence of both Ofsted and DCSF representatives, they were very much anticipated and well attended by delegates.

### The Relationship between Community Cohesion and Race Equality

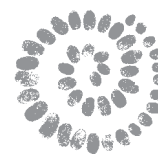
Community Cohesion Standards for Schools were published by the Home Office in conjunction with the then DfES in 2004, which paved the way for the definition of community cohesion provided by the Local Government Association<sup>2</sup> and current guidance for schools published in 2007. They were at that time presented as 'a valuable tool in helping schools to promote community cohesion and fulfil their duty to promote race equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000'.<sup>3</sup> Clarity as to the way the community cohesion duty fits

with the race equality duty (Race Relations Amendment Act 2000), as well as other existing duties imposed on schools is still necessary, however, as the final plenary panel of the day discussed.

The formal guidance for schools notes that the main focus of the community cohesion duty is how to create cohesion across 'different cultures, ethnic, religious or non-religious and socio-economic groups'.<sup>4</sup> The problem here, certainly in relation to race equality, is that the ability of schools to meet their existing duties to promote race equality and good race relations under the Race Relations Amendment Act is patchy, as Patrick Roach from the NASUWT noted in his opening comments. He suggested that as few schools had taken steps to meet their statutory duties to ensure equality on the grounds of race, gender and disability, the current infrastructure had insufficient 'teeth' to ensure schools would fully comply with the statutory duty to promote community cohesion. He was particularly concerned that Ofsted should establish exactly how schools would be inspected in relation to community cohesion, given that it had failed 'so spectacularly' in inspecting schools in relation to the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 - judging some schools as 'outstanding' whilst not similarly accounting for their ability to promote good race relations and race equality was not in his view encouraging. Ofsted thus had not inspected well for race equality - 'they don't know it when they see it'.

Jean Humphrys, Deputy Director of the Ofsted Children's Directorate, commented 'we don't see ourselves as compliance checkers', and emphasised that

they would be looking at the outcomes for children in relation to the new duty. There would be a strong emphasis on self-assessment by schools and she wanted to make clear that though Ofsted could raise issues about the extent to which children were or were not benefiting from cohesion work, they were not 'enforcers' and could not take action in respect of the duty.



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Nicola Rollock asks Trevor Phillips a question; Maureen Grant of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust makes notes

Patrick Roach felt Ofsted to be a significant obstacle. He noted that local authorities, as well as schools, have a mandate to embed race equality in schools and the community, reinforcing additional comment by audience members as to the important role that local authorities could play in promoting community cohesion. He felt, however, that the relationship between race equality and community cohesion was not clear; in fact it was potentially confusing. He had listened to comments made throughout the day and had noted the areas covered in other workshops, and could not practically see any *difference* between them. Why not simply strengthen the race equality agenda? Was the introduction of a new duty to promote community cohesion

2 Local Government Association (2004) *Community Cohesion - an action guide*. LGA guidance for local authorities [http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/communitycohesionactionguide.pdf].

3 [http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Building\\_Cohesion\\_In\\_Schools?version=1](http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Building_Cohesion_In_Schools?version=1).

4 Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) *Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion*. London: DCSF. [http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00598-2007.pdf]



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Morning panel debate: Baroness Sayeeda Warsi and Andrew Stunell MP



Morning panel debate: Sarfraz Manzoor (Chair) and Tony Breslin



Delegate asking the morning debate panel a question



Sir Keith Ajegbo



Delegate asking the morning debate panel a question

**Morning Debate Panel** (Chair: Sarfraz Manzoor, Writer & Journalist)

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 Democrat Party  
Tony Breslin, Chief Executive, Citizenship Foundation  
Sir Keith Ajegbo, Lead Associate for Education, Institute of Community Cohesion

**Afternoon Debate Panel** (Chair: Clive Jones CBE, Trustee, Runnymede Trust)

Steve Sinnott, General Secretary, NUT  
Helen Williams, Director, School Standards Group, DCSF  
Jean Humphrys, Deputy, Children's Directorate, Ofsted  
Patrick Roach, Assistant General Secretary (Policy & Communications), NASUWT

- Conference photos were taken by Benedict Hilliard.



Afternoon panel debate members (L-R): Steve Sinnott, Helen Williams, Clive Jones (Chair), Jean Humphrys and Patrick Roach



Delegate asking the afternoon debate panel a question



Afternoon panel debate members Steve Sinnott and Helen Williams



Afternoon panel debate members Clive Jones (Chair), Jean Humphrys and Patrick Roach



Rob Berkeley with Terry Deehan from NICEM

actually necessary? Comments made in the morning plenary session by Sir Keith Ajegbo about the continued likelihood that African Caribbean boys in schools were three times as likely as other pupils to experience school exclusion,<sup>5</sup> reflected a clear difficulty in mediating race equality and community cohesion. He felt it important to note that, despite the focus on cohesion, institutional racism remained a persistent and worrying issue.

Discussion raised in the afternoon workshop following presentations by Nicola Rollock (Institute of Policy Studies in Education), Tony Sewell (Generating Genius) and Yasmin Bevan (Denbigh High School, Luton) noted the continuing experiences of underachievement by African Caribbean pupils and exclusion from the educational 'scripts' that denoted success. Tony Sewell in particular felt that self-segregation among Black male pupils not only prevented cohesion but also enhanced underachievement, a point heatedly discussed at length by delegates attending the workshop.

Both Steve Sinnott (NUT) and Helen Williams, Director, School Standards Group, DCSF felt the community cohesion duty was indeed important and necessary given the inability of all children and young people to learn about diversity based simply on the ethnic and religious make-up of their schools and neighbour-

hoods. Helen Williams felt that cohesion could fit well with the race equality duty as it built on existing equalities. It would help to promote respect and understanding between groups and shared values in the interests of cohesion and integrated communities, and Ofsted's Jean Humphrys reiterated that it prepared pupils from *all* backgrounds to fit within a multi-ethnic society.

Ultimately, that delegates remained unsure as to the specific role of schools in meeting this new duty, and still required clarity as to the specific outcomes around which they would be inspected from September 2008 onwards, suggests that the issue of promoting community cohesion within education is a complex one. For those schools working hard to create cohesive activities for pupils, resourcing remained the biggest issue of all, as did the need for structured support from their local authorities. For those who remained anxious as to their role and responsibilities now that the duty is fully effec-

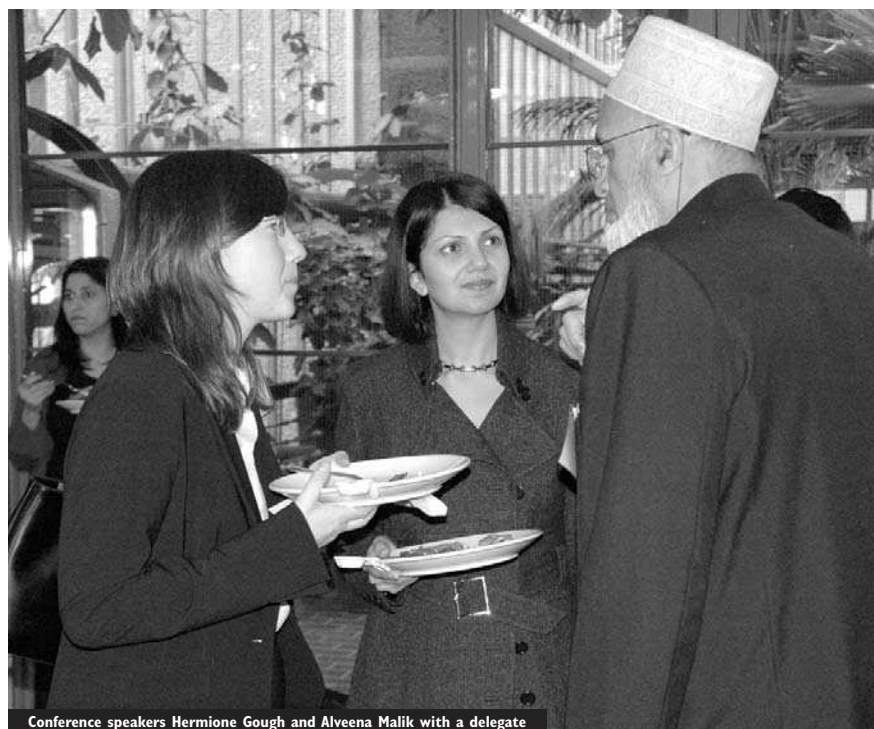
tive, reassurances from government on the day were unable to ease persistent worries. What would the impact be on teachers who themselves already felt excluded within their schools? What was the relationship between religious education syllabi, citizenship teaching and cohesion given the poor status of the latter and the difficulties in reconciling how the former would work with cohesion activities? How did policies on increasing the numbers of faith schools fit with the cohesion agenda, despite the comments made by Trevor Phillips earlier in the day that many of these schools were more ethnically diverse than local community schools?

What is *important*, nevertheless, is that the conference gave delegates and speakers the opportunity to raise many of these questions - questions which have been circulating since the duty itself was announced in the Education and Inspections Bill - directly with government representatives. What is *clear* is that there is much for the DCSF to take away in respect of providing responses to the need for support these schools and organisations continue to express. □



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5 Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Getting it: Getting it Right. Exclusion of Black Pupils: Priority Review*. London: DFES. [<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/PriorityReviewSept06.pdf>]



Conference speakers Hermione Gough and Alveena Malik with a delegate

# Extracts from a speech by Trevor Phillips

Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission

Educational institutions are the living embodiment of the fundamental proposition that we can find more to share than to quarrel about, given the chance. Even schools, colleges and universities where people study exclusively with people from the same backgrounds as their own can still provide spaces where we can learn about people who are different from us.

That of course is one reason why the Commission for Racial Equality in 2006 made the suggestion of a duty on community cohesion as part of the Education and Inspection Bill. I am pleased to say that this was accepted by Ministers and introduced. We do have some reservations however: Guidance so far has been somewhat sketchy and weak. In the context where CRE surveys have shown that schools are far from able to develop effective Race Equality Policies, we will be looking to some extra attention from our friends at Ofsted in this area.

For example, a school that makes this new duty central should be working not only on external relations (with parents, voluntary organisations, local community groups) but applying it systematically in terms of its access policy, trying to attract pupils from all communities.

So what advice can schools and others expect from the new Commission? Let me ... turn to the gardening metaphor ... I would suggest that in our educational garden there are three features that would characterise a successful approach to building an integrated education system.

## **First, we avoid making things worse by planting new dividing lines.**

In England and Wales, we know from work carried out at Bristol University that schools are typically more segregated than the area in which they are located. This arises from the operation of parental choice. There is nothing wrong with offering parents more choice; but there should be levers in the system that prevent the aggregate effect of many choices leading to a spiral of separation.

In some towns in England, for example Oldham, consideration is now being given to location of new city academies with a specific aim of ensuring that the schools are shared by districts with very different ethnic composition. This can be done through relatively simple adjustments to the planning regime, and though it may cause some doubts to start with I believe that in the long term it will lead to better schools overall - which is what all families want.

## **Second, we don't have to dig up the whole garden at once. We can do this step by step.**

The government has now announced a £3m school twinning project in an effort to break down barriers. Last week I was in Bristol, talking to Council leaders concerned about ethnic divisions between schools and the gang culture that often goes with them. Some schools are almost 100% white. Others, for example in the inner city, have high ethnic minority populations. Last year they acknowledged that disaffected young people - especially young white men - perpetrate the majority of the reported racist incidents in the city. So what have they done about it? The Council has developed a school twinning project in which children from different schools had sessions in school time to discuss issues around diversity, difference and culture. They believe that in time this will bridge some of the gaps.

Kirklees provides another example. It has over 90 primary schools which are effectively mono-cultural. Through a school twinning project that brought together pupils from different backgrounds to share and experience different cultures, children made new friends with people who were different from them.

What they say, and I've seen this happen elsewhere, is that this prevents the establishment of stereotypes that many of us think are ridiculous, but which are widely believed - for example, the idea that skin colour determines religious affiliation.

The Scottish Government, as part of a programme in schools to tackle sectarianism has recently published a guide to twinning between denominational and non-denominational schools. In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education has, under the Education for Mutual Understanding programme, promoted in all kinds of schools the development of educational programmes to encourage better community relations, including a statutory requirement to include within school curricula themes such as fostering respect and dealing creatively with conflict.

All of these initiatives are based on the fundamental hypothesis that what we have in common is greater and more powerful than our differences.

## **Finally, (and my gardening metaphor is about to break down irretrievably here) we shouldn't think about integration by colour, or species, but by class.**

We will never be a society confident with our own diversity as long as some are disproportionately disadvantaged. Diversity coupled with unity enriches our society; but difference allowed to fuel inequality is capable of destroying it. And socio-economic division, or as we used to call it class, still throws up the greatest inequalities. Addressing class difference is critical to our ambition to challenge the iron law that an infant's start in life would be conditioned by who his or her parents were; that children's achievements and talents should be constrained by the circumstances of the households in which they grew up; and that young men and women should have no larger ambition or opportunity than that afforded to their parents.

And here we could get really radical. In 2000, the local education authority in Wake County, North Carolina took the decision to abandon its policy of trying to mix students by race, and instead opted to mix them by economic background. Some 40 districts across the USA have followed suit, using free school meals as a proxy for poverty.

The system doesn't single out individual students. The districts are divided into hundreds of small units, each classified by the number of children who qualify for free school meals. The goal is to ensure that no school has more than a certain percentage on free school meals; or more than a quarter underperforming on regular tests. The balancing of numbers is achieved by moving a whole unit of children rather than an individual. In Wake County something exceptional has happened. Despite overcrowding, and a 45% non-white mix, the county's schools are performing so well that white families are now returning from the suburbs.

There's more than one way to grow a garden ... but the prospect of a diverse garden, with flowers and plants all blooming in their own way, each setting off the beauty of the other, is one we can all work towards. I hope I've planted a few seeds.

*Trevor Phillips was speaking at the Runnymede Conference 'Promoting Community Cohesion Through Schools'.*

*The speech can be read in full at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/newsandcomment/speeches/pages/runnymedetrust.aspx>*



## Extracts from a speech by Jim Knight MP

Minister for Schools and Learning, DCSF

Schools ... are focal points for their local communities, as well as communities in their own right – bringing children together to learn, broaden their horizons and share experiences. They provide a compulsory, statutory service and therefore are uniquely placed as a universal service touching the lives of every family in every community. We introduced the new statutory duty to send a strong signal that we believe promoting community cohesion is central to what schools do.

Today, I can announce that we have agreed to fund a toolkit prepared by the Institute for Community Cohesion to give detailed, practical help to every school to fulfil the new duty. It will help schools identify areas of strength and weakness, and point them towards examples and resources to help them fill any gaps.

And we want to hear how the new duty is working on the ground. So we will be setting up a Head Teacher Reference Group to feed back from primary and secondary schools and to help develop any further support that may be needed.

Last month, we committed - in partnership with the Pears Foundation - an investment of £3m to set up the Schools Linking Network. This will extend the pilot to three more areas immediately and then continue the roll-out of the programme to other parts of the country over the next three years.

A new 'matching' website has been set up to help schools find partners online.

Today I am pleased to announce ... our New Arrivals Excellence Programme which will support local authorities and schools in helping children [newly arrived in Britain] to quickly overcome barriers to learning. This will include a DVD demonstrating some effective teaching and learning methods and we will also publish a set of professional development modules for teachers in January – four for primary schools and four for secondary schools. The Exceptional Circumstances Grant will be available for local authorities with significant extra pressures on their school budgets from new arrivals. This can be applied for on a case by case basis where the proportion of pupils needing to learn English significantly increases.

Finally, it is planned that Ofsted will begin inspecting schools on community cohesion from September 2008. Schools – with support from their Local Authorities – will therefore have time to prepare. I want to make sure that the inspection of the duty properly considers whether schools are making appropriate efforts based on their circumstances. Ofsted will therefore trial the inclusion of the new duty in its inspections early next year in a range of schools and report back to us.

*Jim Knight was speaking at the Runnymede Conference 'Promoting Community Cohesion Through Schools'.*

*The speech can be read in full at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/speeches/speech.cfm?SpeechID=723>*



## Extracts from a speech by Parmjit Dhanda MP

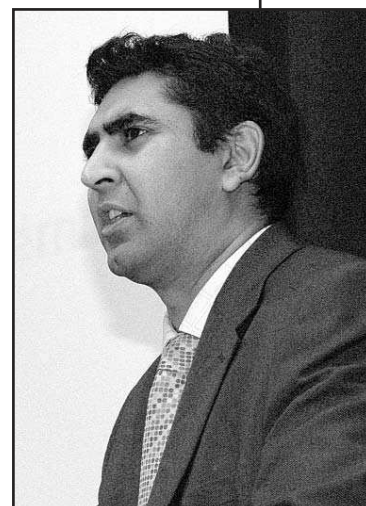
Minister for Community Cohesion, DCLG

[O]verall the national picture on cohesion is positive. Data published recently from our Citizenship Survey confirmed that just over 80% of people think that people of different backgrounds get on well in their local area. 85% of people felt they belonged strongly to Britain. An encouraging 77% felt they strongly belonged to their neighbourhood. Britain is a place where the vast majority of people feel they belong, and are comfortable and confident about diversity.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. As a country, we are experiencing enormous change. Britain grows more diverse and new patterns of mobility across the world continue to make a difference to everyday life in our local communities. These are new challenges for some, affecting parts of the country which may not have experienced them before. And these are challenges for everyone: local authorities, service providers, the NHS and individuals – as good neighbours and citizens. Building cohesion, therefore, is a top priority for my Department – whether it be working to tackle prejudice and tensions, increasing perceptions of fairness, or building strong bridges between different groups and developing a sense of belonging.

What does this mean in concrete terms? In Hazel Blears' initial response to the Commission in October she promised a significant increase in support for local authorities for cohesion – from £2m in 2007/08 to £50m over the next three years. This will help local councils to make promoting cohesion, and preventing and managing community tensions, part of their core business. With the new Local Area Agreements, local authorities will be properly empowered to set their own agendas on cohesion, and to decide where their own priorities lie.

*Parmjit Dhanda was speaking at the Runnymede Conference 'Promoting Community Cohesion Through Schools'.*





CONFERENCE  
WORKSHOP I

# Cohesion: Working in Schools – Workshop Report

This Workshop Panel addressed itself primarily to some of the innovative practical work on promoting community cohesion already being undertaken in schools. The scope of the panel covered five main areas - to explore the remit of the new duty to promote community cohesion in schools, to examine what this might mean for schools, to consider the stakeholders involved in community cohesion work, to present examples of good practice and to discuss some areas for improvement and support.

## Panel Members:

**Hermione Gough**, Deputy Director of the Community Cohesion Unit, DCSF

With group presentations from:

**Jez Holdsworth**, Assistant Principal of The Moat Community College

**Frieda Smith**, Deputy Headteacher of St Paul's Catholic School supported by pupils from both schools

**Rob Deeks**, Project Development Manager, Aik Saath supported by two young people from the programme

**Chair: Hamid Patel**, Principal of the Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School

**Rapporteur: Dr Claire Alexander**, LSE and Runnymede Trustee

Panel Chair **Hamid Patel** noted that good schools have been involved in promoting community cohesion for many years, although what this means might vary according to the needs, experiences and context of individual schools, locations and communities. He also stressed that all communities have the need to promote cohesion, not just BME communities and he welcomed the recognition of the place of schools at the heart of the community cohesion process - at 'making community cohesion happen at ground level'.

Mr Patel's comments were echoed by **Hermione Gough**, Deputy

Director of the Community Cohesion Unit of the DCSF. Ms Gough noted that the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion, which was launched in July 2007 and which forms part of the 2006 Education and Inspection Act, signalled the importance that government attached to the role of schools in instilling in their pupils the importance of shared values, diversity and belonging.

Ms Gough explained that the duty has three strands:

1. *Teaching, Learning and Curriculum*, where pupils should be able to explore, understand and celebrate difference across a range of subjects;
2. *Equity and Excellence*, which

underscores the government commitment to the 'Every Child Matters' programme and aims at ensuring equality of opportunity, removing barriers and enabling every child to reach their potential;

3. *Engagement and Extended Services*, which sees schools as key focal points linking families, communities and broader society.

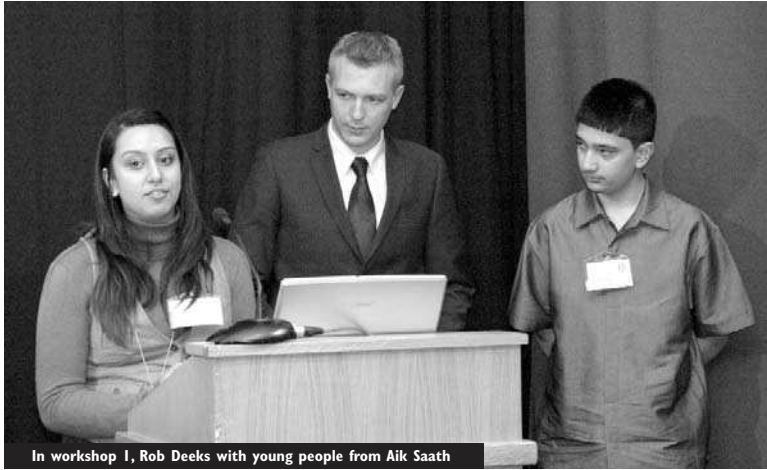
Ms Gough stressed that community cohesion was not just about BME communities, but also other divisions such as gender, socio-economic status, etc. The duty came into effect in September 2007 and will form part of the Ofsted Inspection criteria from September 2008, while the Institute for Community Cohesion will produce a support guide by Easter 2008. Ms Gough also pointed to the importance of working in partnership with Local Authorities to 'embed' effective community cohesion strategies.

The Panel then featured two strong presentations of flagship projects taking place in schools that are already working with the issues of community cohesion.

The first, presented by **Frieda Smith** of St Paul's Catholic School and **Jez Holdsworth** of Moat Community College (with apologies from Alan Curtis who was unwell), focused on their 'school twinning' programme that had been running for the previous 5 years, from 2003 to 2007. The programme involved 60 students, following them from Year 7 to Year 11, some of whom had presented their experiences to the confer-



Workshop I panel members: Jez Holdsworth and Frieda Smith, with one of the pupils involved in their School Linking programme



ence delegates earlier in the day. The students had participated in 4 days of sharing experiences that focused on countering the social/geographical isolation and mutual misconceptions of the two groups. The activities involved swapping schools for a day, a day of group work around the media, an activity day and a final presentation day to parents, school staff and VIPs. The programme is about to start again, this time using some of the former students as peer facilitators for the Year 7 pupils, and aiming to involve 3 schools at a time in the sharing process.

The second presentation featured **Rob Deeks** from Aik Saath (meaning 'together as one'), and two young peer motivators. Aik Saath has been working on the area of conflict resolution and anti-racism in Slough since 1998, initially with the town's Asian (Muslim, Sikh and Hindu) young people to reduce inter-group violence,<sup>1</sup> but has now expanded its remit to work with young people, aged 14-21, across a range of communities, including Eastern Europe, the Gambia and Somalia.

The first half of the presentation focused on two recent projects - a 'school twinning' project between Beechwood and Slough and Eton schools, the former in an area, Britwell, which is predominantly white (84%) and has high levels of social exclusion, and the latter in Chalvey where 98% of the school population is BME. This twinning project was more intensive than the Leicester project, and ran a combination of structured workshops on issues such as refugees, racism, neighbourhood, conflict resolution and community cohesion, as well as residential. The young peer

motivator who had taken part in this project said the programme changed the young people's attitudes towards each other, and lowered levels of tension. It was, he commented, 'an adventure every week'.

The second half of the presentation, facilitated by a young woman with a Polish background, was concerned with cohesion within one school, St Joseph's Catholic School, which had recently seen the arrival of new Polish immigrants. The programme was designed to tackle prejudices and give the new arrivals a sense of belonging and, as she explained it, 'a new way of understanding their surroundings'. This again involved structured sessions, team-building activities and a fieldtrip to the Polish War Memorial ('a little piece of Poland in England they could feel proud of') and London Zoo ('for bonding'). For the young Polish people in particular the project increased their sense of confidence and created mutual understanding and friendship between the new arrivals and their fellow pupils. Rob Deeks noted the importance particularly of the peer-led facilitation, the customised programme development and the role of dedicated

partners in ensuring the success of these two pieces of work.

A number of key lessons can be drawn from both these projects.

First, they demonstrated the importance of small-scale, peer-led and intensive programmes of work with young people in creating effective and powerfully emotive work around cohesion.

Second, however, what was apparent was the relatively small number of young people who were involved in such programmes, primarily due to problems of resourcing for the organisers, particularly within tight school budgets. The crucial need for long-term and dedicated funding for such programmes is clearly apparent if the scale and positive effects of such work are to be sustainable, and not to remain dependent on the ad hoc commitment of concerned individuals.

Third, engagement with local authorities and with local partners, such as the media (local press, radio, TV), is an effective way of embedding school programmes within the wider community, and generating positive effects beyond the programmes and the schools themselves.

The panel presentations made it very clear that young people, and schools, are at the forefront of community cohesion strategies and successes, and the challenge will be for schools and local authorities and the government to put their money and support behind such initiatives and to build on such hopeful beginnings. □



## CONFERENCE WORKSHOP I

1. See Case Study 5 in Sarah Isal's (2005) *Preventing Racist Violence* report, launched by Runnymede in November of that year.





CONFERENCE  
WORKSHOP 2

# Faith, Cohesion, Schools and Segregation – Workshop Report

Predominant rather than single in character, with teaching that should emphasise commonalities rather than differences between faiths – these are some of the characteristics the ICC would like faith schools to develop, as they amplify their profile within the public sector. However, among many others, there are still discussions to be had about religious education as a subject for teaching compared to a whole-school ethos.

## Panel Members:

**Raja Miah** MBE, Director of Peacemaker

**Alveena Malik**, Principal Associate, Institute of Community Cohesion

**Professor Marie Parker-Jenkins**, University of Derby

**Chair: Sister Kathleen Colmer**, Headteacher of St Antony's Primary School

**Rapporteur: Dr Kate Gavron**

This workshop session explored the impact of the new duty on faith schools, with three specialist presentations.

First, **Raja Miah** described the context in which Peacemaker is engaged in the development of a 'multi-faith academy' in Oldham, a city with high levels of religious and ethnic segregation, both residential and educational, and little interaction between different communities. Peacemaker itself is a 'bridging organisation' historically opposed to faith schools, but it recognizes that they are here to stay for the foreseeable future. It is trying to mitigate their segregating effect locally by creating an academy which will reproduce the moral ethos of good faith schools, provide a space for religious worship and, hopefully, 'create young people with strong and positive values'.

Comments from participants included the observation that a strong moral ethos is not the exclusive preserve of faith schools. Another participant referred to research showing a greater prevalence of homophobic bullying in faith schools. Raja Miah conceded that bullying can be a problem and should be firmly tackled by all school authorities.

**Alveena Malik** of the Institute of Community Cohesion followed with an analysis of the present situation and of some of the challenges of the new duty. Several commentators, including Ted Cante and Trevor Phillips, have warned about the dangers of growing ethnic and religious segregation in British cities. ESRC research has found that bridging schemes between schools are less effective in building relationships between members of different communities than day-to-day interaction, and LSE research has shown how faith schools cherry-pick pupils, leading to inequalities of opportunity in disadvantaged groups. This is despite the fact, as all three speakers agreed, that many faith schools are ethnically diverse. However, diversity is less common in the private sector and the Institute of Community Cohesion sees regulatory advantages in bringing more private faith schools into the grant-maintained sector. The Institute's aspirations are that faith schools should become 'predominant rather than single in character' and that teaching should emphasise commonalities rather than differences between faiths.

One participant pointed out that local authority SACRE

syllabus demands currently do not apply to faith schools and she felt this should be remedied. Another questioned some of the Institute's policies, including the extent to which local authorities could (or should) operate against parental choice in order to achieve desirable ethnic and religious diversity. Another believed that the LSE analysis was flawed and that class, not faith, was the critical factor in educational inequalities, also that there are limits as to how realistic it is to emphasise commonalities between faiths. Instead, we need platforms where differences can be openly discussed and shared.

Another participant agreed with the latter point, noting that open discussion can help people to understand different truths. In response to the point about the syllabus, his view was that religious education should not aim to deliver 'community cohesion' but instead should be an academic subject which teaches about others' beliefs. As a humanist, he recognised faith schools as 'facts on the ground' but said that the non-religious worry about their increase. Alveena Malik said that non-religious views must be included in any debate about faith schools and the RE syllabus.

The third presentation was from **Professor Marie Parker-Jenkins** of the University of Derby, who has written extensively on faith-based education and also facilitated links between schools. Specifically, she has looked at Muslim and Jewish schools, the majority of which are in the

private sector, and at who they engage with. Within the context of the current expansion of faith schools and the political context post 9/11 and 7/7, challenges to community cohesion within a faith-based educational environment include overcoming parental opposition to contacts outside their faith community, negotiating access to other schools and communities via 'gatekeepers' of various kinds, and the difficulties of building and sustaining partnerships beyond school communities, especially in the future when local authority policy priorities will inevitably change. It is vital to work with parents, to reduce prejudice, to broaden the choice of schools, and to emphasise the pupils' 'right to education'. School leadership is vital in negotiations

with parents, who she described as 'potentially the biggest block' to faith schools' engagement outside their faith community.

Most schools liaise with a variety of people and organisations but, she asks: do we demand enough of faith-based schools in terms of engagement with the community? Interestingly, she has found that ITC mitigates the effects of segregation by enabling pupils to engage widely outside their community through social networking sites, even if their parents will not engage. In summary, she pointed out that there is diversity between faith-based schools due to local demographics, and in the UK as a whole most are neither monocultural nor monolingual. However, it is vital that different voices should

be heard in all schools, whether state- or privately-funded, and regulation should be used to identify and spread good practice.

Participants' comments included the observation that many faith schools are welcoming and multi-cultural and places in them are sought by non-faith parents too. Another wondered how Ofsted would inspect, given the ill-defined nature of the new duty. Alveena Malik answered that the Institute of Community Cohesion was working actively with Ofsted to identify suitable and measurable outcomes. A more general question, not limited to faith schools, was what are the 'shared values' around which all can cohere? This is a challenge for the whole educational system. □



## CONFERENCE WORKSHOP 2/3



Workshop 2 panel members: Alveena Malik (Left pic), Raja Miah, Sister Kathleen Colmer (Chair) and Professor Marie Parker-Jenkins (Right pic)



# From BME School Exclusions to High Achievement – Workshop Report

### Panel Members:

Dr Nicola Rollock, London Metropolitan University

Tony Sewell, CEO, Generating Genius

Yasmin Bevan, DCSF

Chair: Gary Phillips, Headteacher, Lilian Baylis Technology School

Rapporteur: Kartan Páll Sveinsson, Runnymede

The first presentation of the session was by **Dr Nicola Rollock**. Drawing on her own research findings, Dr Rollock presented an overview of some of the common ways in which the government approaches achievement within schools, especially black and minority ethnic achieve-

ment. The presentation was divided into three strands:

1. the government perspective
2. evidence from schools, and
3. recommendations for government.

Dr Rollock started with the following statement from Gordon Brown: 'And the Britain I strive for

is a Britain with no cap on ambition, no ceiling on hope, no limit to where your potential will take you and how far you can rise: a Britain where the talents of each contribute to the well being and prosperity of all.' This, she said, provides a useful example of how government tends to approach issues of pupil achievement, i.e. parental involvement, pupil aspirations and (although not in the speech, but present in wider policy) English as an additional language (EAL). While these areas are of considerable importance there are a number



## CONFERENCE WORKSHOP 3

of others the government tends to overlook:

(a) an understanding of ways in which policies are interpreted and implemented on the ground, especially when schools remain under pressure to achieve targets;

(b) the ways in which some teachers hold and exercise stereotypical views about particular groups of pupils and extent of their academic worth.



Delegates at workshop session 3:  
'Are We Getting it Right? From BME school exclusions to high achievement'

She gave three concrete examples. In the first one a white teacher falsely accuses a black boy of a classroom misdemeanour, because he 'looked as though he would do it' and refuses to believe him even when the real culprit (a white boy) comes forward, because the white boy did not look as though he would do it. The second example demonstrated how black staff can be negatively stereotyped by white colleagues. The final example came from Dr Rollock's own research into the experiences of academically successful black pupils.

Based on the research evidence, she had found that staff talked about and supported two definitions of academic success: (1) 'exclusive' success relating to high-status A\* to C grades; and (2) 'inclusive' success relating to the acquisition of lower-status D to G grades and achievements in areas such as citizenship. Crucially and worryingly, each form of success was seen as available only to certain types of pupils. Black male pupils, notably those engaging in what staff termed 'street culture', were unlikely to fit

the profile of the pupil achieving in 'exclusive' terms.

Three recommendations are directed to government:

1. **Teacher training:** According to the Training and Development Agency's annual survey of the training experiences of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), the percentage of NQTs saying they felt their training prepared them to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has never risen above 40%. Government should carry out an audit of the needs of those NQTs and make any necessary amendments to the existing Runnymede Trust teacher training programme 'Achieving Race Equality in Schools'. Training in these skills should be statutory, within both basic training and Continuing Professional Development for teachers, and refresher courses every 3-5 years are recommended.
2. **Effective use of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000:** The RR(A) currently appears to have been reduced to a haphazard recording of racist incidents. There is no genuine engagement with and understanding of racism and race equality, and how race inequalities persist throughout the school system. The new Equalities & Human Rights Commission should use the Act to make schools and government accountable for the educational differences by ethnicity.
3. **The 'absent presence' of social class:** Stark differences in social class are reflected in differences in educational outcome. BME pupils (especially Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean pupils) are more likely to experience deprivation than their white counterparts, but the gap in educational outcomes by social class is far more stark for white pupils than for any other group, as the unequal distribution of wealth is greatest amongst White British groups.

Debates about class inequalities need to be more open and honest; not as an issue of fault-finding among those in the lower socio-economic groupings, but as a way of understanding how those in positions of privilege seek to maintain their advantage and the implications of this situation for other groups.

**Dr Tony Sewell's** presentation revolved around issues of cohesion and segregation. He took as a point of departure the metaphor of a canteen, where children make choices to join certain groups. The space between these groups is wide and crossing it is dangerous. But, he asks, what happens if you move from one group to another in the canteen? You are in fact likely to do very well. Dr Sewell cites research from the USA which indicates that pupils who cross safe group boundaries do better than those who don't.

This, says Dr Sewell, is the crucial point for African Caribbean pupils, particularly boys, who are prone to self-segregation. Due to peer group pressures, African Caribbean boys submit themselves to self-inflicted barriers. This is poorly understood, as there is little research looking into the black 'self'. Research and politically correct discourse has focused exclusively on stereotypes and teacher racism. As a result, difficult questions have been ignored, questions which developments in gun crime are forcing us to face.

One important aspect of the self-inflicted barriers is that some boys hide their academic success. Failure becomes hip. How, asks Dr Sewell, can we encourage boys to break their safe comfort zone barriers? This is exactly the work Dr Sewell is striving towards with his Generating Genius programme. Many high achievers with good grades may choose not to go to a top university, because they would rather go to a local university with their mates. This is not good enough, and with this

aim in mind Dr Sewell is trying to build 'pipelines' along which black boys can travel to the mainstream. The crucial role for adults is to challenge adolescent boys, who both need and want clear boundaries. The curriculum, for example, must be difficult enough to pose a real challenge to pupils. If boys are not stretched to their maximum capacity, their comfort zone is reinforced.

**Dame Yasmin Bevan** brought a frontline perspective to the debate, and introduced the audience to the impressive advances of Denbigh High School, where she is headteacher. In 1991, the school had a terrible reputation as the local 'sink' school. It was very undersubscribed; only 14% of pupils were getting 5 or more higher grades; only 50% of the teaching was deemed satisfactory; and exclusion rates were high, with 33 permanent exclusions and 200 fixed-term exclusions. Nobody - neither teachers nor pupils - wanted to be there.

By 2007, however, the school had been transformed. Now oversubscribed, 69% of its pupils are getting 5 or more higher grades and there have been no permanent exclusions for over 5 years. This year the school was recognised by Ofsted as outstanding (October 2007) having been already acclaimed for its Citizenship programme (February 2006), a recognition Dame Yasmin was particularly proud of. Young people in the community now are very proud of their school too.

How did they get there? Policy has been an important factor. Denbigh High School received 'specialist sports college' status, which has been of great significance. National data has also been beneficial. And Ofsted's wider focus on the outcomes from the Every Child Matters initiative has been helpful. But Dame Yasmin stressed that while policy is certainly important, it is individuals who do the work. In this respect, the hardest thing to change was the mindset of both teachers and

pupils. In 1991, there was a strong and stifling 'us' vs. 'them' mentality between teachers and pupils: teachers held negative and somewhat defeatist attitudes towards the students and their prospects, and pupils had developed a culture where it wasn't 'cool' to succeed.

The essence of the positive changes was to give pupils a stake in and ownership of the school. They were made to feel part of the decision-making process and to have shared in the responsibility for making things happen. Participation was encouraged and student voices were listened to. Citizenship became a large part of the school ethos. With 95% of Denbigh High School's pupils categorized as BME (85% of them Muslim), a significant part of their citizenship training was work developed to encourage a strong sense of personal and shared identity.

### Discussion Points

The discussion ranged widely, but two topics received particular attention.

#### 1. Self-segregation vs. teacher

**racism:** A number of delegates questioned the split of opinion between self-segregation and teacher racism, and asked whether these perspectives could somehow be merged. Dr Rollock said that, traditionally, there are two camps: racism vs. culture. She is wanting to create a third camp, where we cannot ignore individual choice and social pressures, but acknowledge that disadvantage is nonetheless a reality for many pupils. Dr Sewell was of the opinion that liberal discourse is patronising, and that the research agenda does not allow for looking at complexities. Putting pressure on black pupils should be seen as an intellectual challenge, rather than be automatically deemed racism. One delegate was uncomfortable about this argument, and pointed out that as a black practitioner and mother, she is all too aware of the reality of

racism and lack of opportunities. Dame Yasmin said that there is a large focus on disadvantage in the Department for Children, Schools and Families, but that they can only provide a framework; what is important is how this is worked with at a local level.

#### 2. Ofsted:

One delegate stressed the importance of strong black professionals, and how these



Workshop 3 panel members: Nicola Rollock, Tony Sewell, Gary Phillips (Chair) and Dame Yasmin Bevan

must be able to persuade people about the importance of race equality. He was particularly thinking of Ofsted in this respect. As an Ofsted inspector himself, he could categorically state that many of his colleagues have little understanding of race equality. Dame Yasmin agreed about Ofsted sensibilities, but offered the opinion that this is changing, and part of this process is taking ownership of the agenda. Dr Rollock asked the delegate what Ofsted should do. In his opinion, research should inform decision-making, and pupils' aspirations should be at the centre. Another delegate said that the Race Relations (Amendment) Act should be more actively used to evaluate success. We have the right policies in place, but no action plan. For example, some schools record zero race incidents exactly because Ofsted punishes those schools that do record incidents. Dame Yasmin said that it is our responsibility to make an imperfect system as perfect as possible. □



## CONFERENCE WORKSHOP 3

3 *The Vietnamese Community in Great Britain: Thirty Years On*, a Runnymede Community Studies Report by Jessica Mai Sims, is available to download from: <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/projects/communitystudies.html>



CONFERENCE  
WORKSHOP 4

# Migration and Its Implications for Educational Access and Cohesion – Workshop Report

Changing migration patterns have implications for educational services and resources. Schools and local communities may need to adapt their services, institutional practices and ethos to be able to provide the necessary access for children of migrant families and support for teachers trained overseas.

## Panel Members:

**Leonie McCarthy**, New Link  
**Dr Dimitrina Petrova**, The Equal Rights Trust  
**Jennifer Moses**, National Association of Schoolmaster and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)  
**Dr Patrick Roach**, NASUWT  
**Chair: Dr Rob Berkeley** and **Jessica Sims**, Runnymede  
**Rapporteur: Jessica Sims**

**Leonie McCarthy** began the panel's set of presentations by outlining the work of New Link, a voluntary organisation working to facilitate the reception and settlement of new migrants in Peterborough. New Link does not concentrate solely on education, but provides an example of service delivery and information-gathering practices that can be relevant for schools and local authorities under pressure to incorporate new families.

residents and defuse tensions in the community, New Link began a series of targeted projects to help migrants and existing residents.

New Link has established a one-stop-shop service that records relevant information about new arrivals - language skills, education and training - registers them with a GP, enrolls them on English and citizenship classes if appropriate, and gives them information on their rights and entitlements. From

about this by training facilitators to meet with locals and neighbours to resolve problems that arise from cultural and language barriers. As part of their outreach work New Link has also been involved in a coordinated press campaign to counter negative representations of new migrants.

A few members of the audience expressed frustration with government about the impact of recent migration to various areas. Specifically, schools were aware that new families would be coming within their orbit but did not anticipate the scale of migration, or how it would affect the local area. Many felt that government should have taken a stronger lead in helping local government absorb new migrants. Because of this, the audience was interested in hearing more about best practice in contacting and engaging with new migrants. Even though Leonie McCarthy's presentation did not focus specifically on schools, she provided insights on how best to provide information to new families and surmount possible communication barriers. New Link had created information leaflets and cards about their services in various key languages and then made them available to local service providers and local councillors. They also were having success through partnering with employers to raise awareness of services and regulations. She emphasised the need to come up with creative ways to provide information and to access people.

**Dr Dimitrina Petrova** contributed to the discussion with a human



Workshop 4 panel member:  
Leonie McCarthy, Manager, New Link



Workshop 4 panel members:  
Dimitrina Petrova, Jessica Sims (Chair), Patrick Roach and Jennifer Moses

Public services in Peterborough became strained after 2001 when many asylum-seekers were dispersed to the city, and Eastern European migrants came in search of work. With the strain on services and the change of neighbourhoods, existing residents expressed resentment of the perceived special treatment the newcomers were receiving. In an attempt to accommodate the new

their practice of registering the skills of new migrants, they realised they were a potentially useful resource for the community. Money that was used to hire interpreters from other areas could be better spent in training local people to provide those services. Also, assisting migrants to adapt to the area has also meant doing outreach work with the established community. New Link has gone

rights perspective on education and services for children and young people. Advocating a child-centred approach to education policy, she argued that migration was not a coherent approach to take towards children because it focuses on the status of parents. Aside from highlighting the necessity for a child-centred approach, Dimitrina also raised the issue of segregation, and called for greater work to engage white British children in a cohesion agenda.

Segregation is an important issue that faces children from both migrant and minority backgrounds. There is evidence that English schools are more highly segregated than those of other European countries. Segregation in and of itself should not be a concern unless it results from coercion or there is an absence of informed consent and quality education. Dimitrina provided a successful case of desegregation in Texas, where universities guarantee places for each high school's top 10% of students, which has resulted in an equalising of the quality of US public schools.

Another aspect of a child-centred approach to policy in a British context, and how it can impact community cohesion, is the focus on white British children in early years education. Speaking from experience of having raised children in Britain, she believes that invisible barriers prevent white British children from forming friendships with children from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds. Currently the activities provided for children to become familiar with each other's cultures and backgrounds are superficial and inadequate for building meaningful relationships or cohesive communities. The challenge is how to inform the children and families of white British backgrounds about the benefits of the community cohesion agenda in education.

This need to engage white British pupils and their families was further discussed by the audience. How do schools best convey to white British families their role in a

community cohesion agenda, and the overall societal benefits of community cohesion? How can prejudices be broken down between generations? How can staff further develop greater engagement and go beyond superficialities? Practitioners seem to be cognisant of these issues - that community cohesion is not only about minority ethnic groups; however, they are also in need of leadership to address these pressing questions.

**Dr Patrick Roach and Jennifer Moses** focused their discussion on overseas trained teachers (OTT), and how they can be involved in a community cohesion agenda. Their presentation specifically focused on the discrimination OTTs face in employment and how this discrimination limits their involvement with their local communities.

Community cohesion is a concept that involves both industrial relations and service delivery, and therefore includes teachers as well as students and their families. Their argument is that when teachers are treated poorly, children are probably treated worse. Therefore to ensure that teachers are provided with maximum opportunities every effort should be made to break down workplace discrimination in the interest of greater engagement with the local community.

Patrick and Jennifer presented evidence that OTTs are treated poorly in their careers as a result of low membership of trades unions (less than 50%), with 40% working in supply, over 60% working as unqualified teachers without studying towards their Qualified Teachers Status, and one in five reporting experiences of workplace discrimination. OTTs and teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds also complain that they are not developing their careers, and are brought in only to deal with crisis situations involving students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

They believe there is a need to deliver equal opportunities for OTTs and address workplace

discrimination. Also needed is recognition that teachers are part of the community and their role is thereby essential for improving community cohesion. Programmes seeking to strengthen communities should include teachers, and LEAs should take a lead in supporting schools in order to promote greater opportunities.



## CONFERENCE WORKSHOP 4



Delegates at workshop session 4:  
'Migration: Implications for educational access and cohesion'

### Discussion

The discussion after both sets of presentations was on how to best support all teachers in promoting a community cohesion agenda. A member of the audience supported the view that there is discrimination towards OTTs, and felt that without more intervention on the part of local government this would continue to be a problem. Others felt that teachers from 'non-traditional' backgrounds, BME or overseas trained, are not progressing in their fields and have to be marketed in specific ways to find jobs. As mentioned in the presentation, BME teachers have felt that they are only valued in situations where their ethnic or cultural backgrounds seem useful in challenging situations, which compartmentalises their experiences. Whereas many felt that teachers in general were not equipped to promote diversity in schools and were less confident in implementing community cohesion. The discussion reinforced the need for promoting teachers from overseas trained and BME backgrounds to be included in the mainstream school environment and for equipping white teachers with the resources for them to feel confident in promoting diversity and community cohesion in their schools. □