

OUR COMMUNITY

PROMOTING POSITIVE COMMUNITY RELATIONS AT XAVERIAN COLLEGE

Love one another as I have loved you” John 13; 34

WHAT ARE POSITIVE RELATIONS AND COMMUNITY COHESION?

Community cohesion involves a broad range of themes. The Catholic Education Service has provided a useful framework for understanding the common concepts and values that it involves:

In the public sphere, community cohesion is often discussed in terms of:

- Respect for diversity, which actively attempts to understand rather than merely coexist with others;
- Equality of opportunities and striving for excellence, which ensures all children and young people are able to access appropriate education and welfare support, helping them to achieve their full potential;
- Participation and engagement, which creates a sense of belonging within the local and wider community, with a desire to improve the well-being of all and encouraging positive relationships.

These terms are encapsulated in the current working definition of community cohesion of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG):

A cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

MISSION, ETHOS AND CULTURE

We are all God’s children, and thus all worthy of respect and fair treatment.

Xaverian College has a long history of contributing to community cohesion in Manchester. Respect for others, support for the development of the full potential of each individual and contribution to the wider community are key aspects of the Mission of the College

The College's ethos and culture reflects this Mission and the Gospel values on which the college is based. The College provides opportunities for community members to understand others in an environment of harmony and tolerance. The College enables each individual to develop their full potential, whether spiritual, moral or intellectual specifically through the curriculum, the RE, Chaplaincy, Pastoral and Enrichment Programmes.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The College has extensive policies and procedures that promote diversity and equality of opportunity amongst the College community. These are contained in the Equality and Diversity Strategy Manual. These policies and procedures are firmly based on the Mission of the College and its Catholic ethos.

The most pertinent policies and procedures to the promotion of community cohesion are:

- The Single Equality Scheme .
- Code of Practice on Harassment.
- Monitoring, Reporting, Reviewing and Updating – these policies include the analysis of performance, eliminating differences in outcomes and how diversity and equality of opportunity are promoted in curriculum areas.
- Policies relating to staff as regards equal opportunities.
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These policies and procedures are developed in consultation with all members of the College community and are communicated in a programme of awareness raising and training.

ROLE OF THE CURRICULUM

The College has a broad curriculum which is planned so that it is appropriate to the needs of students. The College ensures that barriers to learning and differences in performance and experience by ethnic groups, by disability and by sex are eliminated.

Each course team has identified ways in which diversity and social cohesion are promoted in their area. This includes consideration of learning resources, displays and classroom practice. Lesson observation takes account of diversity issues and indicates the effectiveness of strategies to promote diversity and cohesion.

The outcomes of monitoring and primary impact assessment (included in the Social Inclusion Report) indicate that strategies to ensure that individual academic potential and the elimination of barriers to learning have been successful. In the small number of cases where a group's performance is below benchmark rigorous action planning and the setting of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures are put in place to improve performance at least to benchmark.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE RE PROGRAMME

The Xaverian RE programme aims to develop the students' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of ethical, moral and religious issues. The programme seeks to nurture the

students' skills in analysing and reflecting upon the issues that affect them and the communities they belong to.

The programme of study essentially follow the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church (Advent/Lent/Saints' Days etc) and covers key national and international issues and weeks in the year such as "Prisoner's Week", "Homelessness Sunday", CAFOD initiatives etc.

The RE programme at Xaverian helps students critically reflect on the ultimate questions in life. As well as being able to articulate their own faith positions, the course enables students to examine and reflect upon a number of religious faiths and practices in our culture. By understanding the culture of others the College seeks to encourage community cohesion. Students explore the relationship between religious belief, personal faith and lived experience. The lessons help develop the students' skills in responding to the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences in life and enables them to make an active contribution to the wider community.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE PASTORAL PROGRAMME

In line with Gospel values the concept of the individual as part of a community is at the heart of the Mission of the College. Students, via the pastoral programme, are presented with a variety of themes that stress students and staff working together e.g. Equality and Diversity; Harassment and Bullying, while the assembly programme reinforces the concept of integration, e.g. Five Pillars of Islam, and the opportunity to serve the community, e.g. 'One Water': Barnardo's Flag Day; Toy Appeal.

The pastoral programme facilitates the shared values and sense of belonging which is a distinctive characteristic of the College community. It provides a means to appreciate diversity and to share common life experiences and expectations. It promotes positive relations between all community members no matter their background. For many students it provides the only opportunity to develop an appreciation and understanding of people from other cultures. The pastoral programme is therefore central to the facilitation and appreciation of community cohesion.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

Activities and Enrichment have always played a major part in promoting a sense of College community and allowing both staff and students, from all backgrounds, to work together. Particularly good examples of this are in music and drama activities. College productions have always been cast both across ethnicity and across gender: boys play girls parts and vice versa, whilst a good example of anti-racial stereotyping would be the College's celebrated version of The Trojan Women with a black Achilles and a black Helen of Troy. Music offers a wide range of multi-cultural experiences (Jazz improvisation, Gamelan and Klesmer workshops etc.) to encourage an appreciation of diversity. Other activities (sport, art, various visits and trips etc) are similarly diverse. The Natural Born Leaders initiative was specifically designed to provide positive role models for ethnic minorities. All activities

facilitate the promotion of a cohesive community enabling students to appreciate diversity by working together.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHAPLAINCY

The chaplaincy organises the cycle of community worship of the College involving contributions from many faith groups. It also provides considerable opportunities to engage in voluntary activities that involve students in local and national initiatives that help the community that we serve.

FINAL WORDS

Xaverian College is committed to being an inclusive and harmonious community. We welcome students of many faiths and ethnic origins and we are socially and culturally diverse. The College celebrates this diversity as one of our greatest riches and in line with Gospel values we reach out to the wider community with love and respect.

The College emphasises a community in which the individual is respected and who in return accepts the responsibilities of being part of a community that is based on Gospel values. Much of our success could be said to be intangible, such as the positive environment and feel of the college. But our results, small number of student complaints and student feedback (for example, over 97% of our students feel they have **always** been treated equally and fairly) are all testament to our success at promoting inclusivity.

The strong pastoral support provided by the College is the foundation for the good relations and social cohesion that is characteristic of our community. This is further supported by comprehensive equality and diversity policies and procedures and by staff who are committed to promoting diversity and practising equality of opportunity.

The College adopts a truly holistic approach to the development of each community member, whether student or employee. The Pastoral Programme reinforces our message of inclusivity with a variety of activities and presentations including Islamic Awareness Week and our anti-bullying strategy. The RE Programme plays a crucial role in promoting inclusivity and social cohesion. For instance, the prominent position given to the study of comparative religion enables each individual to develop an appreciation of the culture of others in order to be able to contribute to a multi-cultural society. The College also expresses its commitment to inclusivity through publicity material and in the curriculum. The College takes every opportunity to challenge stereotypes and prejudice and the excellent working relations amongst the diverse groups that make up our community is testament to our success at promoting inclusivity and social cohesion.

We believe that belonging to such a diverse community is an education in itself, where an appreciation of the culture of others provides a deeper appreciation of one's own culture and of the wider society of which we are all a part. Our commitment to inclusivity is firmly based on Gospel values and our conviction that by valuing each and every individual we come to a closer understanding of the divine in all of creation.

