

Diocesan Education Conference 2009

Schools and Community Cohesion

The question ‘what makes communities cohesive?’ is one that wouldn’t have occurred to people in the 1950’s and 60’s. It wouldn’t have occurred to us that our local community or indeed our nation was not socially cohesive. We simply got on with life and were cohesive without thinking about it.

So what has made “community cohesion” such an important concern today?

In the decades since the 1960s Britain has become a highly plural society, with sizeable communities of ethnic minorities from a wide range of countries across the world. Since difference can lead to conflict, it was initially assumed that if only racial discrimination could be tackled, cohesiveness could be maintained and guaranteed.

The argument was made that while newcomers might belong to different religions, faith had no more significance for them than it had for the lives of the majority of British citizens (i.e. minimal). In any case a plurality of beliefs didn’t matter to wider society. People could believe what they liked, what mattered was how they behaved. It was assumed all religions said something similar – a version of the golden rule – do to others as you would be done by. This was the message of the inter faith movement, the stock in trade of Thought for the Day on Radio. But then more recently as immigrant communities have become more settled ethnic minorities, many people have looked beyond skin colour and reacted with suspicion and hostility towards the religions that the immigrants brought with them.

There were two key events in this country in the last 10 years which together have contributed to the Government’s aims and policies regarding community cohesion.

Firstly, the riots in northern towns and cities in 2001 were something of a wake-up call to the nation. The Cantle Report produced afterwards spoke of deprived and impoverished communities and of deeply fractured communities – whites and Asians living side by side, yet in complete ignorance of one another; living ‘parallel lives’.

It was the Cantle report which first introduced the notion of “community cohesion” to the UK – adapting an idea first used in Canada. Community cohesion suggested that if people of different ethnicities, cultures and faiths were to live together in towns and cities with any sense of mutual acceptance and belonging, they had to get to know more about each other and share some common attitudes. Without some core of shared values and some social interaction, people might live in the same town, but it wouldn’t be a cohesive community, and as a country we would suffer the consequences.

Since then the Government has adopted community cohesion as a central objective of public policy which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. As you no doubt know, every Government department, every local authority, every state school, every primary care trust, every housing association is urged to pursue a community cohesion agenda.

Then in July 2005 a group of young men killed over 50 people on the London Transport System. This has made us think more about the place of religion in society, recognising that for some people religion is at the centre of their understanding of who they are. After family, it is the next most important thing – more important even than race. We’ve also come to understand that different religions, and different versions of different religions, give rise to different ways of looking at the world, different values, different ethical norms – and they aren’t always compatible. Yet at the same time there has been an increase in an aggressive kind of atheism and secularism (examples of community nurse in Somerset who was disciplined after offering to pray with a

patient, and of primary-school student in Devon causing problems by speaking of her faith with fellow students).

Religion has become one of the most polarising issues of our time.

This has created new anxieties – How long would the cohesion of the nation survive if it couldn't develop among its citizens a core of shared beliefs and values?

This is one reason for 'community cohesion becoming a central issue for government and nation.'

After all, modern Britain is as multi faith as any nation on the planet. Public bodies are now confronted by people of all the major world faiths with their different beliefs, practices and traditions. London alone has people from over 40 national or ethnic groups and 300 languages.

This requires a degree of knowledge and understanding (religious literacy) and sensitivity.

Until relatively recently it was taken for granted that being British entailed at least nominal adherence to Christian faith – sung evensong was as much part of our culture as was afternoon tea, village cricket and talking about the weather.

But now how can a society that has an array of cultures, ethnicities and religions hold together?

How is social and community cohesion to be forged?

We stand at something like a tipping point. Religion can bring communities together. But it can equally be a force for turning neighbour against neighbour. Its future role depends on our willingness to explore what it means to accept that we now live in a plural world.

In my talk this morning I would like to help you explore what it might mean for a church school to promote community cohesion, even to be Ofsted inspected in this area.

So what does community cohesion mean?

Hazel Blears - Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government:

“The Government’s vision for Britain is one of strong, confident communities where local people of all different backgrounds get on well together. That is why building cohesion is a priority for my department.”

What might the distinguishing markers of a cohesive community be?

In 2002 the Local Government Association suggested that a cohesive community is one where:

- there’s a sense of vision and belonging for all communities
- the diversity of people’s different backgrounds 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

But then in 2007 the Government offered a new definition:

“Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration, which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on 3 foundations:

- people from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities.
- people knowing their rights and responsibilities.
- people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.

And 3 key ways of living together:

- a shared future vision and sense of belonging
- a focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity.
- strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

There is something odd about this definition.

The LGA sees community cohesion as an outcome of policies.

The Government blurs the distinction and it isn't clear whether by community cohesion they are referring to the outcome of policies or the policies themselves.

Both definitions stress the need for a shared vision – but if this shared vision refers to beliefs and values, it is a forlorn hope, for the existence of religious pluralism creates a major issue.

Community cohesion can't be made to depend on people having beliefs in common since, as already said, modern societies are inescapably plural.

In the past, states sought cohesion by enforcing common beliefs and values on their people.

That isn't an option today.

The issue for us is whether we can bring community cohesion out of pluralism.

Notice the Government adds in 2007 the word 'integration', looking for an integrated not just a cohesive society. Or it sees increasing integration as the key to social cohesion. It wants groups of people not just to live amicably side by side, but to get on well together and to build better relationships- to be integrated.

At very least it would need the following things to be achieved:

- prevent the development of separate enclaves of different people.
- encourage more mixed residential areas.
- support regular intercommunity involvement, dialogue and activity.
- prevent the development of separate schools for children of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Exclusive faith schools would need to be discouraged.
- promoting civic occasions, celebrations that bring different groups together.
- discourage any activities that tend to separate one group from another.

- refusing to support activities that aren't open to people of all cultures and religions.

But there are significant questions with all this.

- How does the commitment to recognising and valuing cultural diversity fit in with the idea of integration?
- How can exclusive faith schools be discouraged whilst promoting parental choice?
- How is it possible to encourage diversity – celebrating and supporting different religious and cultures – on the one hand and on the other to promote community cohesion understood as integration, especially when some versions of some religions don't believe in celebrating diversity and hold views of which no British Government can approve.
- Does community cohesion require a bedrock of shared beliefs and values?
- Does religion and a plurality of religions work for or against cohesion?

Before we come to consider the role of church schools in community cohesion, I would like to draw your attention to a significant trend in society which mitigates against community cohesion – and that is excessive individualism.

We were all taken aback 2 years ago by the UNICEF report showing that children growing up in Britain and the USA were amongst the unhappiest children in the world and that they face a much more difficult world than those in continental Europe.

As a result of this the Church of England's Children's Society has commissioned and published a report on 'A Good Childhood' – subtitled 'searching for values in a competitive age'.

30,000 people gave evidence, including 10,000 children, and it has a lot to say about the kind of society we inhabit today, and not least about community cohesion

The report gives a voice to the hopes, concerns and longings of all these children.

Its central thesis is that a society for whom the acquisition of wealth, property and personal status has become the primary focus, has led to damaged childhoods, damaged relationships, damaged communities, anxiety and stress for children in an over competitive educational system.

This report asks why society has become tone deaf to the most fundamental requirements of children, and why words like love, happiness and stability have become eroded for many adults in achieving life giving relationships with others.

The cause of this erosion, says the report, is excessive individualism – the belief that the prime task of the individual is to make the most of his/her own life – rather than contribute to the good of others, rather than contribute to the good of the community.

It was Margaret Thatcher in the thrusting, competitive, achieving 1980s who denied there is such a thing as society

Today ‘choice’ is seen as far more important than ‘responsibility’.

Our ‘ipod’ culture enables people to inhabit crowded or open spaces without needing or even being able to communicate with others.

Pope John Paul II recognised the implications of excessive individualism: “If the promotion of the self is understood in terms of absolute autonomy, people inevitably reach the point of rejecting one another. Everyone else is considered an enemy from whom one has to defend oneself. Thus society becomes a mass of individuals placed side by side, but without any mutual bonds.”

Just one example of the outworking of this excessive individualism is the rising use of social networking sites on the internet. And I digress from the main theme for a moment or two.

What are we to make of social networking sites? What is the massive appeal of them?

First there's the issue of the constraints of modern life. Playing outside is now considered too dangerous. For a child confined to home every evening, the keyboard gives the freedom, interaction and communication that people of my generation took for granted in the back street. Building a Facebook profile is one way individuals can identify themselves and feel important and accepted.

I recently had a conversation with a young devotee who proudly told me he had 900 friends. Clearly there would be no problem here in satisfying the basic human need to belong, to be part of a group, as well as the ability to experience instant feedback and recognition from someone, somewhere 24 hours a day.

At the same time this constant reassurance that you are listened to, recognised and important – is coupled with a distancing from the stress of face to face real life conversation and encounter. Real life conversations and meetings are after all far more perilous than those in cyber world. They occur in real time, with no opportunity to think up clever or witty responses and they require a sensitivity to voice tone and body language.

Moreover – according to the context and the person with whom we are conversing, our own delivery will need to adapt. None of those skills are required when chatting on a social networking site.

Although it might seem an extreme analogy, I wonder whether real engagement, whether real conversations, happening in real time may give way to these sanitised and easier screen dialogues, in much the same way that killing, skinning and butchering an animal to eat has been replaced by the convenience of packages of meat on supermarket shelves.

Perhaps future generations will recoil with similar horror at the messiness, the unpredictability and the immediate personal involvement of a real life, real time interaction?

In the words of one user:

“The fact that you can’t see or hear other people makes it easier to reveal yourself in a way you might not be comfortable with. You become less conscious of the individuals involved (including yourself) less inhibited, less embarrassed, and less concerned about how you will be evaluated.”

So, how might young people be affected by extensive use of social networking sites? I suggest in 4 areas:

1. First is attention span.

If the young brain is exposed to a world of fast action and reaction, of new screen images flashing up at the tap of a key, such rapid interchange might accustom the brain to operate over such timescales.

Perhaps in the real world, when such responses are not forthcoming, we will call such behaviour, ‘attention deficit disorder’.

It might be useful to investigate whether the submission of our culture in screen technologies over the last decade, might be linked to the 3 fold rise in prescriptions for the drug prescribed for Attention Deficit Disorder.

2. A marked preference for the here and now

- where the immediacy of an experience trumps any regard for the consequences. After all whenever you play a computer game you can always just play it again. Everything you do is reversible.

The emphasis is on the thrill of the moment, the buzz of rescuing the princess in the game.

No care is given for the princess herself – because there is no long term significance.

This type of activity – a disregard for consequences – can be compared with the thrill of compulsive gambling or eating.

3. A third possible change – in empathy.

A teacher of 30 years standing told me she had witnessed a change over the time she had been teaching in the ability of pupils to understand others.

Previously, reading novels had been a good way of learning about how others feel and think, as distinct from oneself. Unlike the game to rescue the princess, where the goal is to feel rewarded, the aim of reading a book is to find out more about the princess herself.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that those within the spectrum of autism are very comfortable in the cyber world.

The internet has even been considered as beneficial to autistic people, as sign language is for deaf people.

4. The fourth issue is to do with the possible erosion of our identity through social networking sites.

“I can see that Facebook makes you think about yourself differently when all your private thoughts and feelings can be posted on the internet for all to see. Are we perhaps losing a sense of where we ourselves finish and the outside world begins.”

There is the baffling current preoccupation with posting an almost moment by moment account of your thoughts and activities – however banal.

I suggest that social networking sites deliver pleasurable experiences, but these experiences are devoid of any kind of cohesive narrative and long term significance.

As a consequence the 21st mind might also be infantilised, characterised by short attention spans, sensationalism, inability to empathise and a shaky sense of identity – these are not trends which would aid social cohesion.

So then what Truths then can we draw on from our Christian faith that will inform our consideration of community cohesion? Many of the themes are obvious.

- We believe in a Trinitarian Godhead: 3 persons in interdependent and interactive relationships, different and distinct, giving and receiving, their relationships forming a beautiful and creative dance.
- God loves mercy and justice – seen throughout the OT and NT – the recurring theme that God has a bias for the poor
- Humans created in the image of God – 2 implications
 - Humans created in relationship and for relationship (or more strongly; in love and for love). Bonhoeffer: “Man as spirit is necessarily created in a community, and ... his general spirituality is woven into the net of sociality”.
 - As all humans are created in God’s image, all are equally precious and important (whatever their faith, race, gender, ability).
- the “second greatest commandment” which Jesus taught – ‘love your neighbour as you love yourself’ – resonates with these understandings of God and of ourselves as created in God’s image.
- Followers of Christ are called to serve (‘the last, the least, the lost’)

All these considerations can feed into our understanding of the importance of community and of community cohesion, and of the ways in which living out our faith (both in our schools and in our wider communities) can contribute to the building up of community cohesion.

- But there is one tenet of Christian belief which can cause us to struggle when it comes to considerations of community cohesion, i.e. the uniqueness of Christ.

- How can what we believe about Christ be integrated with the religious beliefs of our neighbours?
- How can we be inclusive as a school whilst standing for this exclusive claim
- How can we best teach the beliefs and practices of other faiths in our church schools and maintain integrity with our own beliefs?
- The NT letters and Acts of the Apostles are so clear about Christ opening the way to God, about the uniqueness of Christ as Son of God, and the uniqueness of his death and resurrection – how do we hold on to these texts, and at the same time teach children about the festivals of Eid or Divali?

The Runnymede Trust Report (“Right to Divide: Faith Schools & Community Cohesion”) published last December noted how crucial schools can be in breaking down barriers between young people, and in preparing young people for life in a multi-ethnic society. And it recognised how important a resource faith schools can be – not in an exclusive and insular way – but in a way which enables the traditions and values of the school to be shared, and to be examined critically alongside the diversity of other faith traditions.

I am delighted that our church schools are inclusive and open whilst standing firmly for what we believe – but it is a fine line which we must tread carefully.

So, bearing in mind the government’s directions, the findings of recent reports and our understanding of the teaching of our Christian faith – I suggest there are 4 key areas in which church schools have something significant to offer in terms of community cohesion:

1. The great importance of Relationships

There is much in the Good Childhood report about parents, who carry the greatest responsibility for our children. This is rightly described as an “awesome responsibility” requiring a long term

commitment by the parents to each other, as well as to the welfare of the child. It requires that before the child is born parenting classes should ensure that the parents are informed of what is involved in bringing up the child.

One finding in the report attracted controversy, and needs to be noted by schools:

Namely that children with step-parents or single-parent appear to suffer short term problems with academic achievement, self esteem, depression and anxiety.

But more importantly was the observation that where there are high levels of conflict between adults in a family, it may be in the best interests of the child for a separation to take place. The critical point is how we support families who get into difficulties. That is why the Report recommends making family counselling and support services more available – which I understand is already in progress (*at least in Newcastle*).

Equally the report makes no apology for printing some of the hard truths about the rapid changes in employment patterns in the past 25 years and the difficulties these can raise for some of our children when both parents are pursuing careers.

I suspect that some of these well-researched observations are simply confirming what you as teachers have instinctively known for some time.

This leads us to a consideration of the people other than parents – including teachers - who can and do have significant influences on children's lives.

It is love that children and young people see as the most fundamental requirement of a good life.

Our children are clear that the foundation for a good childhood is rooted in their experience of primary living attachments with their parents and significant adults, including teachers.

Parents have biggest influence on children's values. But schools also make a major difference.

In our schools we can provide the stability, security and encouragement which allows a child to dare to grow and develop. The relationships which you forge with students will be part of the formation of their lives. The relationships children experience at school can be a deciding factor as to whether they disappear into excessive individualism, or enjoy the richness and the challenges of interacting with a range of different people in their young lives.

Good relationships are vital.

Schools are also important places in which to model what it is to respect and love other people despite differences – but more of that later.

2. Our schools can be a way of reversing inequalities

After the USA, GB is the 2nd most unequal of the world's richest countries.

In GB today 22% of children live in families whose income is below 60% of the typical level of income (this is used as a definition of being 'poor').

30 years ago the proportion of children living in poverty was 13%.

Combinations of inequalities can have a drastic effect on children's life chances,

e.g. A young person aged 13 or 14 experiencing 5 or more problems in the family- such as mental health problems, physical disability, substance misuse, domestic violence, financial stress, neither parent in work, teenage parenthood, poor basic skills, living in poor housing conditions is 36 times more likely to enter the care system or have contact with the police.

And the trouble is that the sort of schooling encouraged by government today can contribute to these inequalities

Our schools give rise to some outstanding successes – but also too many failures. It is a largely excellent system blighted by unequal outcomes.

For our academically minded children we provide an education as good as any in the world.

But for less academically minded kids – especially from deprived areas – it’s often a story of less effective schools, followed by the weakest system of vocational preparation in western Europe.

It is something which our church schools can seek to reverse.

The inequality begins with our primary schools and biggest problem is the huge variation between schools. Children in schools from deprived areas perform far worse than the national average.

This isn’t true of all schools, some do very well despite adverse circumstances often due to an inspiring head and dedicated staff. But the overall picture is one of huge educational inequalities, closely related to social deprivation.

Such children come to school with greater personal disadvantages, they’re more difficult to teach and spend more time messing about in class. There’s a higher teaching turnover.

If we are serious about tackling disadvantage, we need to have our most experienced and committed teachers in deprived areas.

The evidence is that good schools make more difference to disadvantaged children than they do to other children – with bigger affects on their performance.

The picture of unequal outcomes is even starker in secondary schools – in 2006 only 28% of children in the most deprived quarter of schools got 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C – whilst in the least deprived quarter of schools 67% of children achieved this level..

What is needed is better schooling for children in deprived areas.

(I am proud that in parts of this Diocese we have church schools working so hard so faithfully and so well to reverse these sorts of inequalities.

There is no doubt that serving in schools like these can be very hard work, but the rewards can be most satisfying, and in this do we honour God’s concerns for justice and God’s love for all.)

How can we ensure schools like these can continue to offer the best opportunities for children in less advantaged areas?

- 1) Attract more people into teaching – recover the concept of teaching being a calling/vocation
- 2) Train them well
- 3) Make sure every child gets good teaching

In primary schools, teachers account for up to 30% of the variance in their progress – a bigger effect than all other aspects of the school put together.

So good teacher recruitment is the key, as is enough good teachers to go where they are most needed – i.e. our deprived areas.

Therefore higher pay for teachers in deprived areas (after Plowden).

Churches should regard schools as ‘front-line mission’ contexts – and pray for the teachers as one prays for missionaries abroad.

How important it is that CofE schools are not seen as exclusive, but inclusive.

Faith schools have on occasion been criticised for being the cause of divisions:

- concern about Muslim schools and the possibility of promoting extreme views
- preventing debate with other faiths, reinforcing feelings of superiority and allowing stereotypes to take hold
- selection through admissions policies (report into Oldham disturbances gave evidence of admissions policies of CofE and RC schools “contributing institutionally to division within the town”)

Instead we should strive to find positive ways of working with people of different faiths

- discover shared values despite different foundations to them

- discover values of society which can be challenged together (individualism, celebrity culture)
- model the possibility of being able to differ in public with grace (something the CofE sadly does not model well) – example of a Christian, a Sikh & an atheist teacher able to debate together in lessons – sticking firmly to their beliefs but in the context of respect & friendship with one another.

Faith schools should seek to reverse the inequalities of life in our societies, and should do so by being inclusive rather than exclusive.

3. **The difference between ‘learning’ and ‘gaining qualifications’**

You are probably familiar with W B Yeats: “Education is not the filling of a bucket, it is the lighting of a fire”

Schools should be transformational

- they should expand the powers of the mind and they should enrich the spirit
- they should produce a love of learning that lasts throughout life, and an ability to learn.

League tables have become central to the motivation system of children and teachers and this raises some fundamental questions.

If the main aim of the educational process is to produce exam results;

- what does this do to a child’s curiosity and excitement about how s/he learns?
- What happens to the teacher’s incentive to inspire?
- What happens to the child’s incentive to explore beyond what will be tested?

Equally important is emotional learning, to help individual pupils to manage their emotions. This involves 2 types of activity:

- a) There have to be programmes of social and emotional learning for all children.

- b) There has to be emotional support for children in difficulty, especially those with mental health difficulties.

When a school judges its success with a child, it should look equally at intellectual progress and emotional development – to view each student holistically; body, mind and spirit.

Schools have batteries of tests to monitor intellectual development and none to monitor emotional development.

So the Good Childhood report recommends that schools use standard profiles for emotional well being not only at the age of 5, but also at 11 and 14 – profiles like these would help schools to measure their ‘success’, to get to know children better, and to identify those who may be in need of specialist help.

Teachers should be taught how to recognise mental health problems and how to respond to them.

If a child is torn apart by anger or greed, it isn’t easy to live up to good values, even if you subscribe to them.

The research cited in the Good Childhood report provides a powerful argument for teaching social and emotional learning as a subject in schools.

4. Values / morals

Children learn their behaviours and their values from those around them.

Our values and beliefs are what we live by. They tell us how to behave in our dealings with others and they give us our purposes in life. So they define our morality and our aspirations.

Values which we have worked with over the years include:

We should do as we would be done by

We should be fair because everyone matters equally

We shouldn’t harm others

We should be kind and helpful

We should have the courage of our convictions

Giving is better than gettingand so on.

For centuries these values have been drawn from religious belief (in this country specifically from Christian belief), and more recently from other faiths and secular belief about social obligation.

But overall there is now less confidence about values.

And the values of generosity and fairness are more difficult to inculcate when parents and their children are told repeatedly that they need to possess more material goods for themselves, and to compete successfully against others.

I have already spoken about the dangers of excessive individualism.

But the philosophy behind excessive individualism is deeply flawed.

Major funding of psychological research – unselfish people become happier than people who are pre-occupied with themselves. Being less selfish makes you happier.

Clearly we'd all benefit if others were nicer to us. But the research shows that we ourselves benefit from being nicer to others. This clearly shows the central importance for our society of the kind of people we are. If we want to improve our quality of life, we must above all produce better people – i.e. those who are well adjusted to themselves, their family and friends, their social environment. People who have a sense of their personal identity and potential, and who seek to realise their lives by seeking fulfilment not in helping themselves, but in helping others.

Such a society has to be built on attitudes acquired in childhood.

So how do young people acquire a concern for others?

Is moral education old fashioned and counter productive? – or is it more necessary than ever when the media bombard our children daily with worries about their self presentation and self

advancement? - more necessary than ever to put children in touch with their better selves – and to help them handle the selfish streak there is in each one of us?

How do children acquire morality?

1. It develops through fruitful interaction – with parents, other children, other adults – including teachers and clergy.

Without fruitful relationships, the spirit withers.

Research shows that children who are abused rarely become altruistic or empathetic later on.

What children need is unconditional love, but also firm guidance about boundaries and how to behave. The right guidance is based on simple principles:

Other people matter as much as you do.

So consider how your behaviour will affect them and how they will feel.

Agreement is bound to involve compromise

I don't know whether you are aware of some anonymous verses which tell of the influences that make a child:

“If a child lives with criticism

he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility

he learns to fight.

If a child lives with shame

he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with security

he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval

he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship

he learns to find love in the world.

The development of character is also crucial. Again the key is the habits a child develops – care for others and a capacity for positive learning and inner peace. These values come from good role models.

The first key role of the school is to develop the powers of the mind.

The second, equally key, is to train the habits of the heart.

Schools must act as values based communities promoting mutual respect between all members of the school and involving the parents closely. Unless parents are intimately involved in the life of a school, it isn't possible to improve the ethos – but if parents are involved too then the values begin to be felt in the wider community too.

Schools need to work really hard with parents, teachers and children to reach agreed standards of behaviour.

An example of a 'values-based school':

In a school in West Kidlington, Oxford: staff, parents and children agreed on a list of words which embodied the values of the school – came up with 22 values words including:

Respect Trust Courage Hope Loving Tolerance Honesty Love
Responsibility Understanding Humility Peace Co-operation Patience
Gratitude Generosity

Each word acts as the word of the month, written on walls round the school.

Basis for assemblies, lessons, discussions.

Teachers expected to practice the same principles as children.

Parents are included at every step.

Strong emphasis on the need for non violence

Periods of silent sitting.

Reflecting on your inner self and how you are contributing to the needs of others.

There's evidence that such silent sitting improves well being.

The school should embody the values being taught and teachers should live them out throughout the week.

And there should be one time in the week when children specifically develop their skills.

Our church schools can be places where values like these are embodied and taught because our staff live these values themselves.

So, to conclude:

So the contribution our schools can make towards social cohesion –

- 1) Good relationships with teachers, as well as parents, are absolutely crucial for the wellbeing of the nation's children and also our society.
- 2) What threatens well-being, also threatens community cohesion:
 - is the lack of communal relationships – the excessive individualism I have referred to.
 - is the lack of trust in others and a decline of collective moral values.
 - is the continuing inequality in our society and the stubborn continuance of childhood poverty.
- 3) We need the commitment to work in less-advantaged areas of society as well as the places which appear more comfortable, and we need a commitment to the development of values in our schools, along with social and emotional learning.

If Government sees community cohesion, however understood, as one of the key challenges of our time, then I am absolutely sure that our church schools, along with our church congregations and the communities in which they are set, have a crucial part to play in the years ahead.

The commitment to cohesion is a commitment to a journey together whereby we can be enriched with what is good and worthwhile in other cultures, but at the same time can challenge those aspects of other cultures that are alien to our core values.

So thank you for everything you do. I'm proud of all our church schools and I'm immensely grateful to all of you – to Margaret, Brian and Eileen at the Diocesan Office, to all of you Head Teachers, Governors, Parish Priests, those of you who are my mentors – who ensure that our Church of England Schools are both distinctive and inclusive as we serve our nations children.