How does St Werburgh's Park Nursery School & Children's Centre promote community cohesion?

Research conducted by Martine Duggan (m.duggan@bathspa.ac.uk)

Principle: Promoting positive identity for all

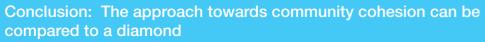**Challenging power relations** – embedded practices situate parents and non-teaching staff in the position of co-expert

Classroom practices **promote a positive attitude towards difference** e.g. Persona dolls

Informative cultural awareness training programme helps members to look beyond differences and to understand **human commonalities**

Pluralistic practices - develop linguistic capital. Food, festivals and celebration events encourage positive response to diversity and difference

Principle: Practical Measures to disrupt parallel living

Public space **to meet and relate to people** – setting brings together community members onto one shared site

Responsive relationships - staff seek to move closer to and connect with the community members - a **social template** or role model for the community which helps to bridge social distance

Culturally sensitive dynamic of 'two way traffic' - setting recognises and incorporates cultural practices of the home

The cultural and linguistic capitals of the community are seen as a collective resource for all to share

Principle: The setting acts as a 'protective site' or 'community haven'

The setting **addresses critical incidents** – essentially protects the Equality Act's 'protected characteristics'

Processes build social trust – high level of contact between staff and community members – 'non-rushed' interactions

Key individuals fulfil a **bridging role** between setting and vulnerable community members – additional emotional support given to attend family support sessions

Social site of attachment – **diverse and culturally sensitive** staff group support members to establish meaningful bonds or tie with the setting

Principle: Connecting with the 'self 'in order to connect with others

Practical measures to encourage non-inclusive assumptions to be challenged... *'It's about gently shifting attitudes'*

Supportive challenge – **safe space to discuss and debate contentious issues** - helps to tackle fear of difference and reduce stereotyping

Dedicated time devoted to **promote intercultural understanding**

Conclusion: The approach towards community cohesion can be compared to a diamond
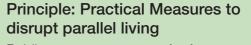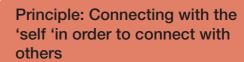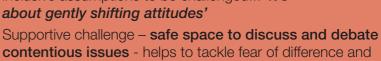
The diamond has multiple faces - the setting is multi-faceted – multiple inclusive interactions contribute to their community cohesion approach

The iconic diamond is universally recognised with clarity on what it symbolises. Similarly, the non-judgmental setting is renowned for its inclusive practices. Members attracted to the egalitarian principles it reflects

A diamond is reflective and transparent - open minded and responsive staff present as an array of social mirrors - affirm and validate disparate identities – encourage members to feel proud of their cultural heritage and to appreciate that others may feel equally as proud

A diamond takes a long time to form – this contributes to its robust and enduring nature. Similarly, the setting's rigorous community-centric policies and practices have evolved through an on-going, reflective and democratic process which relies on community engagement and participation

Conclusion: People at the heart of our processes

The setting operates under a **person-centred and community-orientated paradigm** – encourages members to account for the assumptions they may harbour towards others

Bonds of trust - a social product which help members to feel a **sense of shared belonging or affiliation** - a core construct derived from 'feeling of equal worth to others' – one of the most important **'human capabilities'**

Robust equalities policies, processes and practices – encourage members to develop **narrative imagination** - to understand what it feels like to be in the shoes of another