

**A Research Study of Pupil Perceptions of
the Schools Community Relations Programme**

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1.0 Rationale

- 1.1 This research study is supplementary to the existing consultation document, *A Review of the Schools Community Relations Programme 2002*. The purpose of the initial review of SCRCP was to assess operational structures and their impact on community relations, identify effective practice and make recommendations for its future operation. Representatives at Departmental, Board and teaching levels were consulted as part of the review process. However, due to time and financial constraints, young people involved in the Programme were not included in this phase of the research.
- 1.2 This supplementary study has been undertaken in response to a recognition that pupils are key stakeholders in the Programme, and as such should contribute to the evaluation process. The views and perceptions of participant pupils have hitherto not been investigated.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The second stage of the research has taken place in a climate of change for community relations policy. Running concurrently with the SCRCP review, an overall evaluation of community relations, undertaken for the Northern Ireland Executive, has been conducted in recognition of wider political and societal changes. The remit of the review was to fundamentally reconsider current policies and programmes *to a policy that reflects the political, economic and social environment envisaged in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (OFMDFM)*. The resulting consultation paper *A Shared Future* (2003), published subsequent to the initial SCRCP review, reflects government plans and priorities for 2003-06, and re-iterates the existing recognition of the role of the education system in informing young people of their responsibilities as citizens. There is also a continued commitment to put in place by December 2003 a new policy and strategy to promote good relations and tackle sectarianism. This includes the development of :

- a shared society in which people are encouraged to make free choices in their lives that are not bound by historical divisions;

- a pluralist society, with respect and tolerance for cultural diversity, where people are free to assert their identity.

2.2 Further, recent critiques (Robinson, 2003; Hughes et al, 2001) suggest that positive community relations in Northern Ireland have nose-dived in the last seven years, with both Catholics and Protestants showing a greater preference to work and live apart. Any changes to SCRP must be made in the context of wider consultations.

2.3 *A Shared Future* suggests that the Department of Education (DE) should implement a co-ordinated programme of action involving schools, teacher training, curricular development and the Youth Service to promote better relations among children and young people, including :

- promoting a culture of tolerance and reconciliation across the whole education system;
- enhancing the contribution of teacher education to the promotion of tolerance and reconciliation;
- placing the good relations dimension of citizenship at the core of the new school curriculum.

3.0 The Education Environment

3.1 The purpose of the initial review of the SCRP was to assess existing operational structures and their impact on community relations, identify effective practice and make recommendations for its future operation. The resulting recommendations were intended to inform the long term future of the Programme. Of significance to this report were the structural and operational recommendations for the Programme. Notable recommendations collectively identified an evolving Programme which recognised a more pluralist definition of community relations, whilst retaining the local context within which individual schools operated. It was anticipated that this re-defined format would inevitably impact on operational aspects of the Programme, including content, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

3.2 The common ethos of all community relations policy has remained the central commitment set down in DENI Circular 1982/21 which defined the responsibility of all those involved in the education service to work towards helping children to understand and respect each other in preparation for living in harmony in adult life.

3.3 Since the devolution of the SCRCP to Education and Library Boards (ELBs) in 1996, the total number of schools involved has remained relatively stable. In 2001/02 the total number of schools involved in the Programme was 604, representing 53% of primary and 50% of post-primary schools. The total number of pupils involved was 41,345, representing 22% of primary and 3% of post-primary pupils (Table 1).

4.0 Aims of the Study

4.1 The overall aims of this supplementary research study are identified as follows. To :

- i) clarify young peoples' understanding of SCRCP practice;
- ii) gain an insight into the experience of programmes from the perspective of young people;
- iii) seek young peoples' opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of current programmes;
- iv) consult young people on how the Programme might better address community relations issues.

5.0 Methodology

5.1.1 The chosen research methodology and associated evaluation instruments have been designed to evaluate curricular and community relations requirements relating to the operation of the SCRCP.

5.1.2 In order to build up a representative profile of pupil views, twenty schools – involving one primary link and one post-primary link in each ELB – were identified by Board Officers. The schools were representative of the range of community relations programmes. The range included :

- school type – including controlled, maintained and integrated;
- geographic location – to represent schools in both urban and rural settings;
- nature of link – ranging across history, science, environmental and sports programmes;
- gender – to include single sex as well as co-educational groups;
- duration – to include new and existing links;
- schools in areas of high sectarian tension.

5.1.3 A quantitative and qualitative approach to the collection of data was considered the most efficient means of collecting pupil perspectives. Two instruments for gathering information – a questionnaire survey and focus group interview schedule – were developed.

5.2 The Questionnaire

5.2.1 The questionnaire survey (Appendix 1) provides information about pupils' knowledge and perceptions of the Programme they were engaged in. Since the aim of the evaluation study was to investigate pupil perceptions of the Programme, the questionnaire focused on 5 key areas of analysis : namely what the pupils considered to be :

1. the reason for the link;
2. the nature of the link;
3. their recollections of the link;
4. their reflections on the link;
5. the strengths, weaknesses and suggested improvements for the link.

5.2.2 A further section of the questionnaire enabled the research team to gather additional background data relating to age, gender, school type and ELB area.

5.2.3 Responses to the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows.

5.2.4 The use of the questionnaire survey was welcomed by teachers. In each instance the researchers facilitated the completion of the questionnaire, although the teachers were present in most cases. All pupils were encouraged to freely answer the questions as honestly and openly as possible. Primary school pupils experienced no real problems in completion. It was emphasised that the questionnaire would be completed anonymously and that class teachers would not have access to them. The teachers did not feel threatened by this activity, although in a few instances they emphasised to the class the importance of funding to the Programme's continuance.

5.3 Focus Group Interviews

5.3.1 The questionnaire data was supported by subsequent focus group interviews (Appendix 2) to investigate in greater detail pupil perceptions. As with the questionnaire, the same openness was encouraged. The focus interviews were developed to enrich and validate the data collected from the questionnaire; this enabled the research team to qualitatively explore and clarify any emerging issues. Interview questions were based around the same themes as the questionnaire. Again, teachers did not feel threatened by the questions, although some did interject with responses to prompt pupil memories.

5.3.2 Due to timetable constraints and the various responsibilities of individual class teachers, a majority of the focus interviews were necessarily conducted with all class members. In a few instances it was possible to engage in smaller group discussions. Pupil responses were recorded within identified thematic areas. The researchers recognise that whole class discussions do not constitute ideal focus group engagements.

6.0 ANALYSIS OF DATA

6.1.1 The data drawn from the questionnaire survey (Appendix 3) and focus groups (Appendix 4) provides insight to inform what young people think of the SCRP. Key issues covered include :

- their understanding of the Programme;
- the experiences they have had;
- how they reflected on these experiences;

- what they recommend.

6.1.2 Respondents had the option to tick one or more boxes in most of the questions, often resulting in multiple frequency counts : in those questions, total responses will exceed 100%. Additionally, not all pupils completed every section; these non-responses are recorded as ‘missing’ and appear in the questionnaire analysis. Where ranked, pupil responses are presented in descending order.

6.1.3 Individual pupil comments from the focus group interviews are also introduced in the following section and are used as an indicative illustration of more general views.

6.2 Pupil Profile

- Of the pupils who completed the questionnaire, 173 (52.3%) are female and 158 (47.7%) are male.
- The age profile of pupils ranged from 9 years to 11-14 years as follows :
 1. 9 years (n=48; 14.6%)
 2. 10 years (n=81; 24.6%)
 3. 11-14 years (n=147; 44.7%)
 4. 14+ years (n=53; 16.1%)
- Pupils from each ELB were represented as follows :
 1. BELB (n=75; 22.7%)
 2. NEELB (n=64; 19.4%)
 3. SEELB (n=71; 21.5%)
 4. SELB (n=30; 9.1%)¹
 5. WELB (n=90; 27.3%)
- A total of 170 (51.7%) pupils attend a controlled school and 159 (48.3%) attend a maintained school.

¹ Figure excludes pupils from an integrated college who took part in the focus group sessions.

- A total of 203 (61.7%) pupils are primary level and 126 (38.3%) are post-primary.
- A majority of the pupils who responded indicated that they had not been involved in another link programme at the school, representing 178 (54.4%) of responses. 149 (45.6%) pupils responded that they had been involved in another link programme.
- A breakdown of out-of-school activity as indicated by pupils reveals the following :
 1. Membership of a sports club (n=135; 40.7%)
 2. Membership of a youth club (n=129; 38.9%)
 3. Girls Brigade (n=31; 9.3%)
 - 4.= Boys Brigade (n=28; 8.4%)
 - 4.= GAA (n=28; 8.4%)
 6. Boy Scouts (n=15; 4.5%)
 7. Girl Guides (n=14; 4.2%)
 - 8.= Brownies (n=8; 2.4%)
 - 8.= Bridginis (n=8; 2.4%)

6.3 Reasons for the Link

- Pupil response as to why they perceived their school had a link with another school are as follows :
 1. So that I/we can make new friends and learn about each other (n=221; 66.6%)
 2. So that I/we can learn outside our ordinary classroom (n=148; 44.6%)
 3. So that I/we can learn more (n=147;44.3%)
 4. So that I/we can have a day out (n=51; 15.4%)
- Pupil response as to why they perceived their class were part of the link are as follows :
 1. So that I/we can make new friends and learn about each other (n=232; 69.9%)
 2. So that I/we can learn more (n=167; 50.3%)
 3. So that I/we can learn outside our ordinary classroom (n=155; 46.7%)
 4. So that I/we can have a day out (n=63; 19%)

6.4 The Nature of the Link

- Pupils commented on the work undertaken in the Programme. This included curricular activity and various trips undertaken by each programme. Responses consistently revealed a strong association between the Programme and trips outside school. Sometimes trips were introduced as ice-breaking exercises; pupils, however did not automatically associate the trip with any form of community relations practice.

- Pupil perceptions on where the work with the other school was carried out are identified as :
 1. Outside both schools (n= 309; 93.1%)
 2. Inside both schools (n=129; 38.9%)
 3. At the other school (n=43; 13%)
 4. At your school (n=42; 12.7%)

- Pupil perceptions on the work done with the other school are identified as :
 1. We learned about the past (n=217; 65.4%)
 2. We learned about our new friends, their school and where they live (n=153; 46.1%)
 3. Games and activities (n=148; 44.6%)
 4. We found out about their views and opinions (n=126; 38%)
 5. We learned about the environment (n=96; 28.9%)
 6. Other people and places (n=81; 24.4%)
 7. Something else (n=53; 16%)

6.5 The Impact of the Link

- Most commonly, what pupils learned about their counterparts included name, address, family details, religion, personality, likes and dislikes, and their school – *even about the nuns in the convent!*

- Pupil reflections revealed that acquiring knowledge of the other group was a gradual process which evolved over the course of the link : *there was one school at the front of the bus, one at the back, with those that knew each other in the middle – although we mixed more on the way back.*
- Pupils generally indicated a willingness to engage with each other : *we put aside bigotry, there was no conflict.*
- However, a small minority of pupils also responded that there was no common ground and that they knew : *nothing because we don't talk about it.*
- It also emerged that the link sometimes challenged pre-conceptions and was instrumental in changing these : *we changed the stereotypical view of us and our school.*
- Unsolicited, an issue emerged concerning how criteria was applied to the selection of pupils for the Programme : *we had to do well to get onto the Programme.*
- It also emerged that some pupils had the chance to learn beyond the remit of the Programme : *we even learned about the Chinese boy at their school.*
- Pupils remembered at least one name of peers from the link school, representing 298 (91.1%) of responses.
- Those pupils who remembered the names of peers from the other school are as follows :
 1. More than 4 names (n=105; 35.1%)
 2. 2 names (n=51; 17.1%)
 3. 3 names (n=50; 16.7%)
 4. 4 names (n=47; 15.7%)
 5. 1 name (n=46; 15.4%)

- Most pupils who responded indicated however that they did not remember the name of the teacher from the link school, representing 212 (65.2%) of responses.
- Pupil perceptions on where most of the work was done are identified as :
 1. With people from both classes (n=292; 88%)
 2. With my own class (n=54; 16.3%)
 3. Back in my own classroom (n=31; 9.3%)
 4. By myself (n=17; 5.1%)
- Pupil perceptions on the difference between class work and the work done on the programme are :
 1. A bit different (n=174; 53.5%)
 2. Different (n=124; 38.2%)
 3. Not different (n=27; 8.3%)

6.6 Reflections on the Link

- The majority of pupils were in favour of staying in touch with the other school.
- Most pupils that experienced residential saw them as being worthwhile : *you can spend more time away with them, away from school and out of uniform; you're introduced to different people and get the chance to talk to each other about our views and experiences.*
- Amongst some post-primary pupils it emerged that sometimes friendship groups had drawn in other friends from both schools who had not participated in the exchange. Some post-primary pupils who had previously participated in primary programmes felt that at this level these 'friendships' had been forced and that there had been little real mixing. Some pupils considered the post-primary links more rewarding because of maturity levels.

- However a few pupils did not favour staying in touch : *if you do a link in primary school you get to know them for a year and when you get to P7 you won't have the chance to talk to them again anyway.*
- Most pupils indicated that there was a continuing link between classes, representing 253 (76.4%) responses.
- Means for staying in touch outside school are as follows :
 1. Meetings (n=195; 58.7%)
 2. Letters (n=59; 17.8%)
 3. Texting (n=47; 14.2%)
 4. Telephone (n=46; 13.9%)
 5. E-mail (n=38; 11.4%)
 6. Photos (n=19; 5.7%)
- Pupil perceptions on the friendliness of peers from the other school are :
 1. Friendly (n=208; 63.2%)
 2. Very friendly (n=48; 14.6%)
 3. Unfriendly (n=43; 13.1%)
 4. Very unfriendly (n=30; 9.1%)
- Most pupils indicated that they had enjoyed meeting the pupils from the other school, representing 262 (78.9%) of responses.
- Most pupils indicated that their feelings about pupils from the other school changed during and after the link, representing 198 (59.6%) of responses. This, of course, may be positive or negative.
- Most pupils indicated that they would like to take part in a link programme again, representing 277 (83.4%) of responses.
- Pupils generally expressed a preference to develop a link with schools in their local area. Many pupils believed that such links would facilitate more easily maintained

friendships. Many commented that the drawback of some links was that they were too far away to sustain contact.

- Some pupils also suggested a broader choice in school criteria to enable a link with, amongst others, a special school; a single sex school; an integrated school and a secondary school.

6.7 Improving the Link

- In order of preference the most favoured parts of the link were :
 1. Meeting new people (n=316; 95.2%)
 2. Visits outside both schools (n=314; 94.6%)
 3. Finding out about other people (n=312; 94%)
 4. Visits to the other school (n=300; 90.4%)
 5. Their visit to our school (n=254; (76.5)
 6. The work we did (n=253; (76.2%)
- In order of preference the least favoured parts of the link were :
 1. The work we did (n=310; 93.4%)
 2. Their visit to our school (n=309; 93.1)
 3. Visits to the other school (n=306; 92.2%)
 4. Meeting new people (n=301; 90.7%)
 5. Visits outside both schools (n=255; 76.8%)
 6. Finding out about other people (n=254; 76.5)
- Pupils had many and varied ideas for the improvement of the Programme. The most popular recommendations included : more visits between schools; more mixed groups; more debates; more trips; longer trips; no uniforms trips; more residential and more sporting activities.
- Amongst post-primary pupils support for more trips and residential centred on the quality of contact : *you get the chance to know them if you go further away. You have the chance to really talk to each other.*

- This was reflected in pupil perception on the amount of time (or lack of it) spent with the partner school : *there is a lot of work to do in a short space of time; you need time to relax, to get to know them better.*
- Additionally, some pupils felt that uniforms created an indirect barrier and that : *no uniforms could have made things more relaxed.*
- Some pupils perceived that the Programme and associated activities were largely imposed with little participant consultation, and expressed a preference for active negotiation towards more effective and relevant programmes.
- Some pupils expressed dissatisfaction with ‘ice-breaker’ sessions and variously requested more ice-breakers or a review of the relevance of existing ones : *visiting the Teddy Bear Museum in Brussels was a waste of time.*
- Some post-primary pupils expressed a desire to unpack and follow up certain issues, arguing for the inclusion of an ‘end of exchange’ evaluation : *no formal discussion session was included in the Programme.*
- Some post-primary pupils referred to inconsistencies in participant selection - such as volunteer versus academic achievement – and queried the validity of such an approach : *we had to do well to get on the Programme.*
- A breakdown of responses on possible ways to improve the link were, in order of popularity, as follows :
 1. More visits outside both schools (n=215; 64.8%)
 2. A social meeting (n=196; 59%)
 3. More meetings to learn about each other (n=138; 41.6%)
 - 4.= More visits to the other school (n=83; 25%)
 - 4.= If the teachers swapped classes (n=83; 25%)

7.0 MAIN FINDINGS

7.1 The main findings to emerge from the questionnaire survey and focus group interviews will inform the subsequent recommendations. Although they are based on pupil perceptions, significantly they also reflect many of the conclusions drawn from interviews in the previous review with ELB officers and teachers. The main findings are identified as follows :

7.1.1 The community relations focus of Programmes still remains vague. Pupils were not familiar with the term SCRP. Many spoke articulately of the curriculum project they were engaged in, but few made any reference to a community relations dimension.

7.1.2 Few of the Programmes are 'issue-based'. The remit of the Programme remains heavily influenced by curricular objectives, and this is how it was perceived by most pupils.

7.1.3 There is still a strong emphasis on out of school trips. Although some trips are used as ice-breaker sessions and some are relevant to the ongoing curricular project, pupils still perceive organised outings in themselves as a central feature of the Programme.

7.1.4 Visits to the other school are often seen as a positive and valuable exercise. Many pupils stated that they welcomed the opportunity to mix with partner schools in their own environment. Pupils viewed this as an opportunity to engage in familiar surroundings, and as a means of sustaining regular contact.

7.1.5 The opportunity for pupil interaction is not often evident from the data. Many pupils referred to the importance of pupil-to-pupil contact inside and outside school. It also emerged that existing friendships were important in breaking the ice and facilitating initial contact.

7.1.6 A local link was identified as desirable. Some pupils considered that the geographical distance between the partner schools did not encourage regular and sustained contact. Preference for schools in the nearer locality was seen as a more practical solution.

- 7.1.7 There is a lack of consistency in the level of engagement with teachers from both schools. Significantly, the majority of pupils did not remember the name of the teacher from the link school.
- 7.1.8 Some post-primary schools still adopt a more selective criteria, primarily governed by a desire to promote the image of the school positively in the community. The research suggests that, at best, there is an ad hoc approach to selection based on behaviour or achievement rather than on genuine community relations need.
- 7.1.9 Residential are valued for the nature of contact that they can produce. Many pupils – especially those in the post-primary sector – reported on the advantages of engagement in more relaxed surroundings. It emerged however that, frequently, more productive discussions arose informally and were not generated within the formal Programme.
- 7.1.10 There is little evidence of in-depth unpacking or evaluating the Programme by pupils and their teacher or with the other class. Many pupils welcomed the opportunity to engage in follow-up discussions but considered that the structure of the Programme restricted this. Pupils were equally keen that there should be some form of post-residential and end-of-Programme discussion.
- 7.1.11 Pupils are open to a more pluralist definition of the Programme and to a broader community and parental involvement – to include issues such as racism, ethnic minorities and disability.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

8.1.1 The current reviews of community relations policy and the curriculum have created a climate in which it is possible to reflect on past practice and develop a strategy that is relevant to the future. In the light of governmental and departmental initiatives it is appropriate to measure the significance of the Programme against perceived educational relevance. The recommendations also take account of changes in legislation and policy initiatives relating to society in general which may impact on the future operation of the Programme, including : Equality and Human Rights legislation; the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill; Race Relations; and New Targeting Social Need (New TSN).

8.1.2 The recommendations are written with an awareness of the many and varied choice of projects and activities in which schools may choose to become involved. SCRCP is undoubtedly an important mechanism for active community relations engagement. If the Programme is to remain so, efforts must be directed towards defining a model which not only continues to promote existing community relations strategies, but also recognises the diversity and complexities of an increasing pluralist society.

8.1.3 The recommendations are drawn from the information obtained from the questionnaire survey and the focus group sessions. Analysis of pupil responses suggest that there are implications at Departmental, Board and school levels, as well as associated implications relating to Programme content, delivery, training, monitoring and evaluation.

8.2 The Structure of the Programme

8.2.1 DE and ELBs should review the current format of the SCRCP, assess its appropriateness within a changing social, political and economic climate, and investigate alternative formats that retain a strong community relations focus. This may include :

- a review of the breadth and diversity of existing community relations objectives;
- the development of an adaptable community relations agenda that accommodates the individual issues of schools and the community they serve;

- the development of a community relations agenda that promotes greater inclusiveness, accommodating issues such as gender, racism, ethnic minorities and equality;
- the development of a community relations agenda that reflects and promotes emerging departmental, governmental and legislative policy, including New TSN, equality requirements of Section 75, The Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill and Human Rights.

8.2.2 DE and ELBs should consider the relevance and fundamental purpose of the current format of SCRCP and its fulfilment of community relations policy. The following issues are identified :

- a clear definition of the term community relations in context to primary and post-primary environments;
- greater pupil understanding and awareness of the term SCRCP at primary and post-primary levels;
- an introduction to the language of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding within the context of the Programme;
- the training implications for teachers as part of the development of a structured community relations programme.

8.2.3 The remit of the Programme remains heavily influenced by limited curricular criteria. DE and ELBs should review the balance between curricular and community relations objectives and should investigate strategies for the development of more ‘issue-based’ Programmes that encourage discussion and debate of contemporary issues.

8.2.4 Links at local community level should be a priority. There are benefits in such an approach :

- links with local schools can be seen as a means of addressing social divisions in the area;
- a community issue would seem to provide a potential starting point for issue-based programmes;

- a local programme facilitates engagement at community level engendering greater confidence for progressively wider links within the remit of the Programme.

8.2.5 DE and ELBs should develop clear guidelines and comprehensive criteria for teachers relating to the selection of pupils for the Programme.

8.3 The Delivery of the Programme

8.3.1 DE, ELBs and teachers should collectively investigate strategies to improve the content and delivery of the Programme. Issues to consider include :

- the relevance of the subject area and how it relates to overall Programme objectives;
- the validity of ice-breaking sessions in achieving identified community relations objectives;
- the nature of pupil contact;
- the amount of sustained pupil contact;
- the location for pupil contact;
- the opportunity for discussion and debate during and following the activity;
- the opportunity for pupil progression in ongoing, collaborative programmes;
- the opportunity for constructive Programme progression;
- the associated training implications for teachers as part of a re-defined Programme.

8.3.2 ELBs should investigate strategies to encourage and maximise opportunities for pupil interaction during the course of the Programme. Areas to review include :

- the frequency of pupil contact within Programmes;
- the degree of sustained contact during Programme activities;
- the extent of mixed groupings during Programme activities;
- the extent of pupil interaction with participating teachers.

8.3.3 ELBs should seek to address the ‘trip mentality’ associated with the Programme. The value and benefit of trips and residentials is noted and it is not suggested that they should be diminished. However, the following remedial issues should be considered :

- a review of the relevance of the trip within the context of the Programme;
- a review of the purpose of the residential within the context of the Programme;

- a review of the validity of the trip in achieving identified curriculum and/or community relations objectives;
- strategies to maximise the opportunities for active engagement provided in a residential setting;
- the development of effective strategies for discussion, debate and reflection following trips or residentials;
- potential strategies to maximise opportunities of using partner schools as venues where appropriate;
- the associated teaching and pastoral implications for teachers.

8.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

8.4.1 DE and ELBs should seek to promote monitoring and evaluation exercises as practical and creative community relations opportunities in their own right.

8.4.2 DE and ELBs should review evaluation arrangements to measure the impact of community relations objectives for pupils at primary and post-primary levels.

8.4.3 ELBs should investigate strategies that encourage a culture of reflection amongst pupils and teachers. This includes methodologies to :

- critically reflect on the relevance of chosen programmes;
- critically evaluate the impact and validity of ice-breaker sessions;
- maximise opportunities for pupils to ‘unpack’ and reflect after each activity, individually and with the partner class;
- maximise opportunities for a plenary and/or post-residential discussion amongst participating pupils.

8.4.4 ELBs should investigate strategies to monitor the nature and frequency of contact and develop strategies to maximise pupil interaction with other pupils and with all participant teachers.

9.0 Conclusion

The recommendations of this report essentially re-iterate many of those identified in the associated review of the SCRP. The findings reflect the views of the target group and significantly focus on the structure, delivery and evaluation of the Programme. The current reviews of community relations policy and the curriculum have created a climate in which it is possible to reflect on past practice and develop a community relations strategy that is relevant for the future. This research study of young peoples' perceptions offers the opportunity for future programmes to have greater relevance and impact in the lives of young people, in the life of the school and in the wider community.