

Religious education contributes to community cohesion

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Religious education is key to community cohesion finds new research following a survey of nearly 12,000 13- to 15-year-old students attending schools across the United Kingdom.

The project on "Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity", carried out by the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the University of Warwick, addressed two main questions:

- What are the attitudes of [young people](#) in the UK to religious diversity?
- What are the main influences shaping those attitudes?

The qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (questionnaires) data gathered from secondary school pupils across the UK provide headline answers to the above questions:

- overall, there is a reasonable level of understanding about religious diversity and an open and positive acceptance of diversity among young people
- young people attribute this positive outcome to the influence of religious education, much more than to other factors

Commenting on the findings Professor Leslie Francis, of the WRERU at the University of Warwick, said:

"Since the time of the 1944 Education Act the government's investment

in religious education in schools has been key to creating an informed and open society that has welcomed and nurtured a climate conducive not only to a multi-cultural but also to a multi-faith society.

"Without continued investment in religious education there is likely to be growing ignorance about religious diversity, growing hostility to religious minorities, and serious deterioration in community coherence." The book-length presentation of the project's findings, available [here](#), and the curriculum resources which have been developed on the basis of these findings, available [here](#), illustrate and reinforce the above points while also making a positive contribution to religious education, both in the school and in the community context.

The launch of these two sets of resources on 24 January 2017 in Coventry Cathedral brings the findings from the project and their practical application in the classroom to the attention of both fellow researchers, education practitioners and faith communities.

The findings derived from evidence provided by a survey conducted among nearly 12,000 13- to 15-year-old students attending schools across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Data drawn from pupils attending state-maintained schools without a religious character provide the basis for the following statement:

Seven out of ten (70%) students who described themselves as having no religion agreed that "studying religion at school helps me to understand people from other religions".

The proportions rise to:

- 82% among Christian students
- 84% among Sikh students

- 85% among Muslim students
- 92% among Hindu students

Accordingly, the Warwick researchers argue that religious education is fundamental for [students](#) who belong to the great religious traditions as well as for those who stand outside these traditions.

Provided by University of Warwick

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