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| Name of school:       | Smithills School Specialist Arts College |
| Peer assessor:        | Clare Foster/Russell Milnes              |
| School colleague/s:   | Faye Lowe                                |
| Peer assessment date: | 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2010               |

**School context:**

Smithills is a larger than average comprehensive school situated in an affluent part of Bolton, although large numbers of students travel to the school from more economically disadvantaged areas. Approximately one third of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and about a quarter of all students have a first language other than English; well above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school was awarded specialist performing arts college status in 2003 and runs a programme under the extended schools initiative. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Artsmark Gold and the Sports Charter Mark. (Ofsted 2009)

**Key strengths of the schools work:**

- The strong and effective leadership from the diversity and community cohesion coordinator at Smithills has been instrumental in promoting diversity both within school and throughout the wider community. The school delivers the themes of community cohesion through the quality of its provision, the promotion of equity and excellence and through the engagement of students with the school ethos and community.
- Displays, including art installations in the drama studio, are used imaginatively to promote the multicultural nature of Britain and how the school reflects this. The students have a clear sense of belonging and speak warmly of the school, describing it as a “family”. They feel safe from harassment and are confident that staff are approachable should any incidents of bullying occur; they are also able to use the VLE to contact staff anonymously if they prefer. Bullying and racist behaviour is rare and the school has clear policies and procedures to ensure that any incidents, if and when they occur, are dealt with immediately and effectively.
- Student Voice at Smithills is highly valued and effective; the Student Council is active and vigorous and played a key role in preparations for BSF. Students were closely involved in the recent changes to the school uniform and the pastoral system, the latter moving towards a vertical tutoring system. It is clear that students feel empowered to make an impact on the life of the school and its wider community. They value the variety of opportunities offered in order to challenge each young person

to achieve their potential, to enhance their personal development and well-being and to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills. Students are articulate and show great pride in their school.

- The percentage of students achieving 5 or more A\*-C has risen steadily over the past three years (45%, 62%, 67%), as has the percentage of pupils achieving 5A\*-C including English and maths. Whilst attainment is significantly better for pupils of Indian heritage, the progress measures for KS2-4 are broadly similar for all groups of students. The CVA data show all ethnic groups making satisfactory progress and there are no groups showing significant negative. The three year average CVA by subject does indicate a significant negative for white English and Pakistani students in English and maths but pupil tracking systems are in place for addressing these issues.
- There is strong evidence to demonstrate the teaching and learning of cultural diversity and equality throughout the curriculum, whilst also promoting shared values. A notable contribution to this is made by the Art and Design department in their schemes about Diversity. Students are able to develop empathy and are given insight into the lives of people from different backgrounds – through literature, other media and personal contacts. The extra-curricular life of the school makes an important contribution to this. The school's brass band is inclusive and provides a wealth of opportunities for students to enjoy cultural and creative experiences that reflect and celebrate the UK's increasing diversity. Visitors and speakers are used effectively in challenging students' perceptions of ethnic stereotypes and the pastoral programme makes a significant contribution to the promotion of cultural diversity and equality at the school.
- Citizenship education is outstanding and plays an important and effective role in promoting community cohesion. The subject is taught discretely and all students are entered for GCSE with 81% achieving A\*-C in 2009. The 'Connecting Classrooms' project exemplifies how 'active citizenship' is brought to life for students. Smithills has links with four schools in Pakistan and students act as sports' leaders for pupils in local primary schools.
- Smithills uses a number of different methods to communicate its vision of inclusion and diversity to its community. Parents and community members interviewed spoke very highly of the school stating that it was an inclusive, welcoming and harmonious school that worked hard to ensure all students had a sense of belonging and a strong sense of identity. Many students come from homes where English is not spoken as a first language and the school supports parents by providing interpreters at parents' evenings and the school magazine features pages that are translated into Urdu. Parents interviewed also highlighted communication between home and school as one of its strengths. Smithills have developed outstanding links with the local community. The community brass band meets each Saturday and the school holds regular fundraising concerts to support local charities. The school has close links with 'Starting Point', giving support to families when they first arrive in the UK, thus reinforcing the warm and welcoming ethos of the school.

- All staff have an awareness of and commitment to promoting equality and diversity at Smithills. This is clearly and explicitly demonstrated through the taught curriculum, professional development opportunities, job descriptions and its recruitment process, which is exemplary. The induction programme within the school ensures that all staff understand and fully support diversity and equality.

**Evidence summary:**

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| <b>Standard 1: Ethos</b>  | <b>Achieved</b> |
| A. The school environment, including displays, reflects the multicultural nature of British society and the school (when applicable).   |                 |
| B. There is none or very little evidence of racist and bullying incidents. Zero tolerance of racism and bullying is stated in school policies and there is monitoring of racist and bullying incidents as part of normal school procedures.   |                 |
| C. There is no racist graffiti in the school. If, or when, it occurs it is removed within 48 hours.   |                 |
| D. Students have a strong role in supporting cultural diversity and equality through Student Voice channels and school events. Students work and play together in a supportive and harmonious environment.  |                 |
| E. The school ensures that the food available in the school reflects a diversity of cultures and religious sensitivities. This is also reflected in school uniform and other relevant aspects of school life such as school holiday times as appropriate.   |                 |
| <b>Standard 2: Achievement</b>  | <b>Achieved</b> |
| A. All pupil groups* within the school are making at least good progress over time in terms of their prior attainment.  |                 |
| B. There is a robust process in place to analyse achievement data by ethnicity, gender, free school meals (FSM), Special Educational Needs (SEN), Gifted and Talented (G&T), English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Looked After Children (LAC) which results in actions to raise achievement and narrow the attainment gap of key groups where necessary. |                 |
| <b>Standard 3: Curriculum</b>   | <b>Achieved</b> |
| A. Cultural diversity and equality objectives are built into all subject curriculum planning documentation.   |                 |
| B. The curriculum across all subject areas and in different key stages includes a qualitative focus on cultural diversity and equality.   |                 |
| C. The pastoral curriculum (form tutor programme and assemblies) includes a qualitative focus on cultural diversity and equality.   |                 |
| D. The Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme has a strong focus on exploring and promoting students' own cultural identities and developing inclusive values, such as acceptance and respect of others.  |                 |
| E. The Religious Education (RE) programme promotes acceptance and understanding of different faiths and cultures.   |                 |
| F. The Citizenship programme has a strong focus on exploring diversity within the community to promote cohesion.  |                 |
| <b>Standard 4: Parental/carer engagement and community role</b>   | <b>Achieved</b> |
| A. The school makes clear its positive view of cultural diversity and equality to parents/carers and the wider school community.  |                 |
| B. Events and performances open to parents/carers reflect a culturally diverse range of music, drama, art, history and other aspects of the curriculum.   |                 |
| C. The school has developed good links with ethnic minority community organisations/groups including religious and/or refugee support organisations. Community links are sought to reflect the nature of the school.  |                 |
| D. The views of all parents and carers of all cultures are sought by the school and responded to.   |                 |
| E. Parents/carers of all cultures are fully involved in partnership with the school to support students' learning and development.  |                 |

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| F. Interpreters and translators are used when appropriate at parental interviews and school events.  |                 |
| <b>Standard 5: Staff and Governors</b>   | <b>Achieved</b> |
| A. All teaching and support staff in the school have an awareness of and commitment to cultural diversity and equality. This is reflected in interactions with students and their knowledge of the culture, language and religion of all groups in the school community. |                 |
| B. Recruitment procedures and induction process for new staff include a focus on cultural diversity and equality.  |                 |
| C. The school takes positive steps to provide appropriate role models for all groups of learners through reflecting on its profile of staff and governors and addressing inequality accordingly.   |                 |
| D. The governing body acts as a 'critical friend' to the school on cultural diversity and equality and is fully committed to combating all forms on inequality.  |                 |
| <b>Standard 6: Specific projects and/or innovations</b>  | <b>Achieved</b> |
| The school is active and innovative in promoting cultural diversity and equality.  |                 |
| <b>Overall Level of Award:</b>   | <b>Gold</b>     |

**Strategies the school has identified for further developing this work:**

- Gaps between students' attainment in achieving 5A\*-C and those achieving 5A\*-C including English and Maths still exist and are being addressed.

Russell Milnes  
 CDQS Assessor  
 July 2010