

[Press release: Lord Bourne encourages schools to celebrate diversity and build inclusive relationships](#)

Faith Minister Lord Bourne visited the Stockwood Discovery Centre in Luton today (29 November 2018) to see first-hand the work of a government funded programme, to help school kids learn more about different faiths and backgrounds in their local communities.

The minister joined pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds taking in part in a Schools Linking Programme at the Centre.

Jointly funded with the Department for Education with support from the Pears Foundation, the Schools Linking Programme currently engages with 18,000 children and young people from different backgrounds across the country and provides sustained opportunities for them to meet, build new relationships, work together and contribute to their wider neighbourhoods.

These opportunities include taking part in competitive sports to boost team-working skills, creating collaborative artwork and community volunteering.

Faith Minister Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth said:

Schools Linking is a great example of how children and young people from different backgrounds can come together to meet, learn and share interests that help them prepare for life in modern Britain and make them great citizens of the future.

The government is determined to support programmes such as these to ensure young people from all backgrounds have the opportunity to take part in challenging and rewarding experiences.

In March this year, the government set out an ambitious long-term plan of action to tackle the root causes of poor integration and create a stronger, more united Britain.

The [Integrated Communities Strategy green paper](#), to which £50 million will be committed over the next 2 years, sought views on the government's bold proposals to boost English language skills, increase opportunities for more women to enter the workplace, and promote British values and meaningful discussion between young people.

Case studies on the success of the Schools Linking

Programme

Heaton St Barnabas Church of England Primary School, Bradford and Nessfield Primary School, Keighley

St Barnabas Primary School and Nessfield Primary School started a new link between all 120 of their Year 4 pupils this year (2018). The children met at their local outdoor centre to take part in collaborative activities which helped them find common ground through shared interests including art and poetry. As the children continue to develop their shared interests, facilitators can stimulate dialogue and help children find out more about one another.

Armitage Church of England Primary School, Manchester and North Cheshire Jewish Primary School, Stockport

Pupils from 2 Year 3 classes in each school exchanged names of class members prior to their first meeting. From this exercise the children noticed that they had both different names and different interests and hobbies. There was much excitement for 2 boys who shared the same name which later led to the foundations of a new friendship. As they celebrate their differences the 2 boys look forward to their next opportunity to meet and build on their relationship.

Further information

The Linking Network

The Schools Linking programme is led by the [Linking Network](#) charity. It supports schools and communities to develop a positive, cohesive ethos by helping children and young people to explore identity, celebrate diversity, promote community and champion equality.

Working in 26 areas across the country, the Network in partnership with local authorities and charities directly delivers school linking programmes by supporting local schools with guidance for facilitators, training for teachers and tried and tested classroom resources.