Summary Research Report 5: Pupils' Understandings of Identities, Citizenship and Belonging

Research Aims and Methods

Our research addressed pupils' identities and citizenship. We conducted five focus group interviews with groups of pupils across our three research schools during which we asked questions focusing on these areas:

- How would you describe yourself (identity)?

- What places do you identify with (local, national, European, international)?

- What countries do you identify with?

- To what extent do you feel European?

- What do you understand by European citizenship?

- What does being a European citizen mean to you?

Summary of Key findings

- Students described themselves as having very strong local and national identities (e.g. Yorkshire, English, British).

- Students reported no sense of European identity (i.e. they do not feel European and would not describe themselves as Europeans when asked where they are from) although some recognised that they are members of the EU. Only one student described herself as European because many of her family members are from different European countries.

- Students whose families are originally from South Asia described themselves as British-Asian (and in one case British-Indian). Their local identity was strongest (e.g. their attachment to Leeds or Yorkshire) and they also felt an attachment to the countries from which their families had migrated (India and Kenya were places that were specifically mentioned).

- Students did not directly express global or international solidarity.

- One group of students in School A who expressed ethno-nationalist and xenophobic attitudes argued that Germans are much less European because of the Second World War.

- Students see England as different and separate from the rest of Europe (an example was using the pound sterling rather than the euro as currency). They described feeling cut off from continental Europe. They believed England has less in common with the other members of the EU (who they see as more

united). A few students mentioned having more in common with the USA, partly because they speak the same language.

- A number of students were able to articulate what being a European citizen means: freedom to travel within the EU for leisure or work; living in another EU country; engaging with other cultures; and common rights and securities in the EU (e.g. health care).

- Students explained that they do not usually consider the meaning of Europe or what it means to be a European citizen.