

# GREAT REPRESENTATION.

VOLUME 3 Edited by Rachel Macfarlane and Michael Catchpool

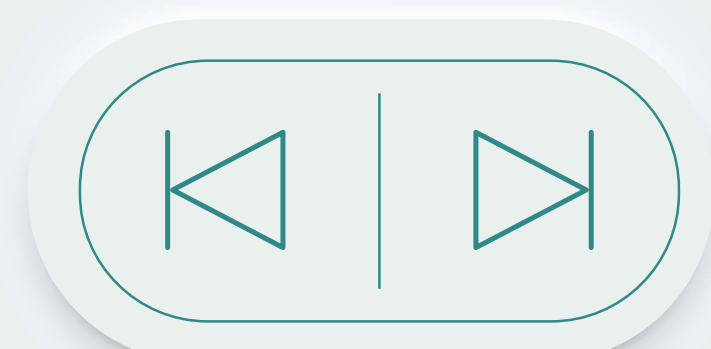
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## Rachel Macfarlane

Rachel Macfarlane is Lead Adviser for Underserved Learners at HFL Education. From 2007 until 2018 she was a National Leader of Education, serving as headteacher of three contrasting schools over a 16-year period. In 2011 Rachel joined Ark Schools to set up a new co-educational, all-through academy for 4–18-year-olds in Ilford, East London. This was judged by Ofsted – in 2014 and again in 2018 – to be outstanding in all areas. In 2017 and 2018 the Year 11 students gained GCSE outcomes that placed the school in the top 1% of schools nationally for progress. The school won the Pearson “Shine a Light” Secondary School of the Year Award in 2018 and was shortlisted for the *TES* Secondary School of the Year Award.

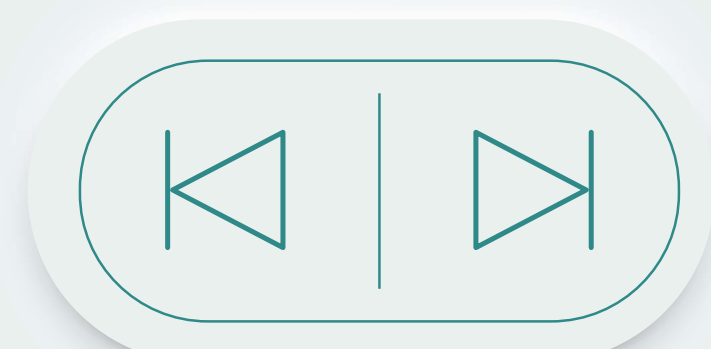
From 2009 to 2018 Rachel was project director of the London Leadership Strategy’s Going For Great (G4G) programme, which involved working with leaders of outstanding schools to share good practice and produce case studies, for dissemination to London schools.

Rachel is a visiting fellow at the Institute of Education. From 2016 to 2018 she served on the headteacher board for the regional schools commissioner for the North East London and East of England regions. She is a fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching. She has written three books: *Obstetrics For Schools: A guide to eliminating failure and ensuring the safe delivery of all learners* (2021), *Unity In Diversity: Achieving Structural Race Equity In Schools* (2023) and *The A–Z of Diversity and Inclusion* (2024).

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## *Michael Catchpool*

Michael Catchpool is the District School Effectiveness Adviser for North Hertfordshire at HFL Education. He has over 30 years of experience in primary education. Michael has worked in a variety of school settings and been a successful headteacher in three large primary schools.

Michael has a PhD from the University of Cambridge; his doctoral research was focused on children's engagement with peer feedback and its impact on them as writers. He has a keen interest in the role that drama can play in children's learning, particularly with regard to supporting children's writing; this was the focus of his master's degree research.

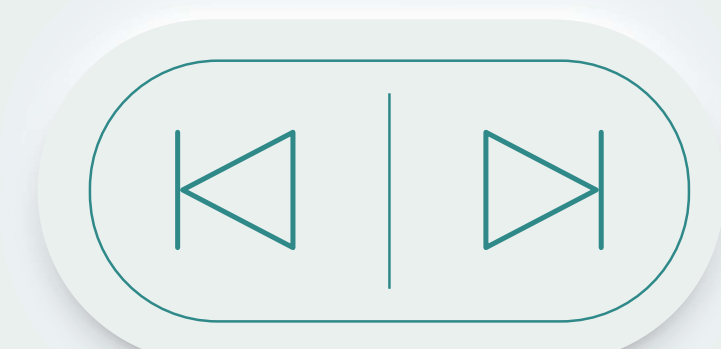
Michael served as a presenter and as a mentor for the Aspire programme, run by the National College of School Leadership, which focused on supporting and providing guidance for Black, Asian and minority ethnic teachers who aspired to senior leadership positions.

In addition to working in schools, Michael has been a senior lecturer in primary education. Michael has previously worked in Hertfordshire as the County Primary English and Drama Adviser, as well as a school improvement partner. He is co-author of several resource books for primary schools, as well as being the author of ten picture books for children.

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The Great Representation programme for school leaders has been a key part of HFL Education's work, since 2021, to progress an anti-racism agenda.

At HFL Education, all staff set themselves a race equity performance objective as part of the annual appraisal cycle. All colleagues also receive training on unconscious bias, discrimination and equality issues, and HFL Education's common language around race. Recruitment and staff development processes have been reviewed and revised to support the organisation in growing a diverse staff body, representative of the society in which we live.

At the same time as giving serious thought to the steps that HFL Education needed to take to become an anti-racist organisation, the executive board also considered the support they could give to colleagues in schools, settings and trusts to be anti-racist organisations. Toks Olusamokun was appointed to join HFL Education in September 2021 (funded by Herts County Council) as a race equality adviser. In September 2022 a second race equality adviser, Shammi Rahman, (funded by HFL Education) joined the Wellbeing Team. Education colleagues across Hertfordshire and beyond are benefitting from their race equity consultations, training and advice.

In 2021 the then director of education, Rachel Macfarlane, proposed a plan for a new annual leadership programme, called Great Representation. This would be based on the model of the Great Expectations programme that had run for the previous three academic years in Hertfordshire, bringing leaders of primary, secondary and special schools together to share great practice and learn from and with each other. Whereas Great Expectations had focused on schools' actions to close the attainment gap between economically disadvantaged learners and their more advantaged peers, this programme centred on initiatives relating to race equity implemented at participating schools.

The key aims of the programme were to bring together leaders of Hertfordshire primary and secondary schools, (mainstream and special) to:

- encapsulate the key features, structures and practices of schools (from nursery to secondary) that have a strong ethos of anti-racism, to better understand how schools become great at inclusion, diversity and equity
- explore strategies, review literature and hear from expert speakers on how to achieve great representation of people of colour in the curriculum and the school community
- share great practice and ensure that schools engaged in exciting race equity practice are contributing to system leadership in Hertfordshire

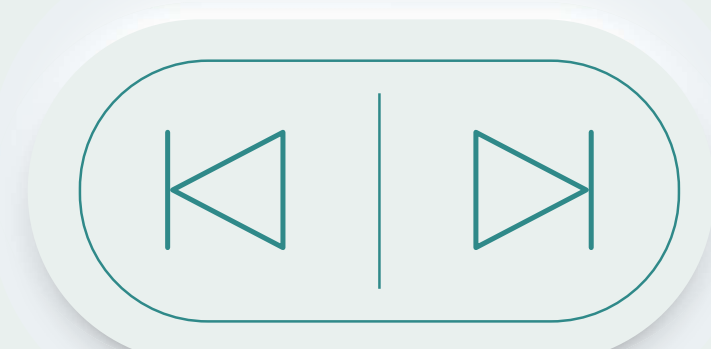
In May 2021 all Hertfordshire schools were invited to apply to be part of cohort 1 of the Great Representation programme. The 23 schools selected were those that could best evidence demonstrable impact in an aspect of anti-racist action.

The format of the programme comprised a series of seminars over the course of the academic year, attended by the headteacher/principal and another member of the senior leadership team (SLT) of each school on the programme.

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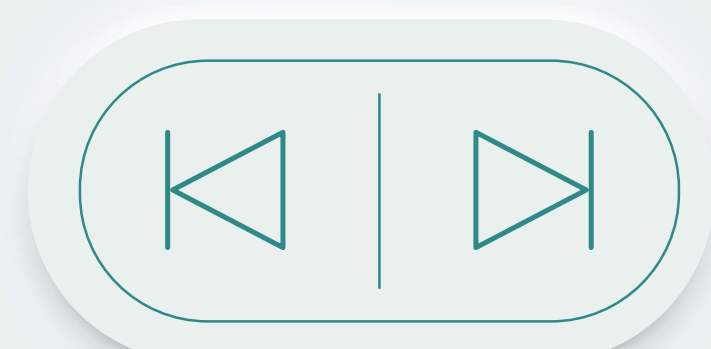
At each seminar, a keynote speaker (or two) gave a presentation or ran a workshop on an aspect of race equity in education, as inspiration, stimulation and provocation for the leaders attending. The delegates then shared and discussed the keynote talks and other reading and research about impactful anti-racism action in schools. They also conducted activities to reflect on and scrutinise in detail their specific contexts, practices and challenges.

Between seminars, delegates conducted visits with their peers to three other schools on the programme, to learn from their best practice and to form links for ongoing school improvement collaboration. They fed back to the entire group at the next seminar about lessons learnt and good practice that they took away from the visits to adapt and implement in their own schools.

Each school on the programme also wrote a case study over the course of the year, on an initiative that they had successfully introduced and evaluated at their school to increase race equity. At the seminars, peers read and critiqued these case studies during the drafting and redrafting stages, learning from and with each other. These case studies were then edited and collected into a volume of best practice, to be shared with every school and setting across Hertfordshire. Thus, although only a small number of schools were able to participate in the programme, the impact of the initiative reached across every school in the form of a book, which was designed to inspire leaders with practical suggestions of initiatives that they might consider – albeit with adaptations – for their own institutions.

In 2022–3, a new set of 28 Hertfordshire schools took part in cohort 2 of the Great Representation programme. The format was as in year one. However, this time, instead of writing case studies of impactful race equity practice already implemented in their schools, delegates from the participating schools wrote a reflective journal of their learning and the activity undertaken related to promoting race equity in their school over the course of the year. These 28 reflective journals were presented in Volume 2.

In 2023–4, a further 28 schools were selected to make up cohort 3 of the programme for the Great Representation programme (one sadly dropped out part way through the year due to staffing challenges). They too have completed reflective journals of the activity they have engaged in and their learning around race equity over the course of the 2023–4 academic year. Their journals are presented in this, the third and final volume of Great Representation.

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The speakers at the six seminars in 2023–4 were:

Paul Miller, Professor of Educational Leadership and Social Justice

Cynthia Rowe, Headteacher at How Wood Primary School, St Albans

Claire Stewart-Hall, Founder of Equitable Coaching

Sufian Sadiq, Director of Teaching School, Chiltern Learning Trust

Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga, UCL Centre for Holocaust Studies

David Gillborn, Emeritus Professor of Critical Race Studies at the University of Birmingham

Melissa Lowry, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Lead, Knebworth Primary School

Toks Olusamokun, HFL Education Race Equality Adviser

Shammi Rahman, HFL Education Race Equality Adviser

Dal Babu OBE, former Senior Metropolitan Police Chief

Evelyn Forde MBE, Education Consultant, former *TES* headteacher of the year award winner and ASCL President

Bennie Kara, Director of Adhara Education and co-founder of Diverse Educators

Penny Rabiger, Researcher and Education Consultant

Seb Gray, Headteacher of New Bradwell Primary School

Laurie O'Brien, then Headteacher of Chater Primary School

Rebecca Woode, Headteacher of Woodlands Primary School

Geeta Patel, Headteacher of Mount Grace School

Margaret Wix School leaders and pupils

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We send our sincere thanks to all these people for their stimulating, challenging, inspiring and impactful contributions to our learning.

As this book goes to press, plans are underway to bring together leaders from schools in cohorts 1 and 2 of the programme for a new race equity programme in 2024–5. The aims are to:

1. support school leaders to reflect on, audit and share the story of how their race equity work has developed and become embedded, analysing what is working well and what has been/is still a challenge
2. facilitate learning with and from colleagues from other schools, involving school visits in the role of “critical friend” to support peers with their next race equity challenge
3. assist each school in identifying an aspect of race equity work that they are strong at and designing and then delivering a training module/event/talk/resource at/for another school to effect system-wide school improvement

We are excited to commence this work in September 2024.

*Rachel Macfarlane*

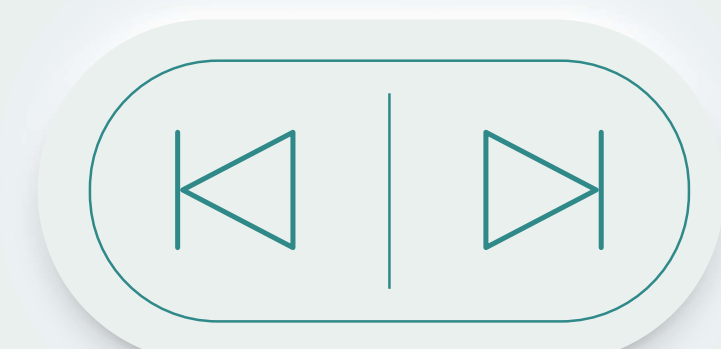
May 2024

A note on language: You will notice that a variety of terms are used in the various case studies to describe and categorise people according to ethnicity or “race” (albeit that race is an artificial social construct!). You will read “people of colour”, “minority ethnic”, “BAME”, “racially minoritised” and “non-White”. The language used in this area is highly emotive, eliciting strong opinions and reactions. We have spent many hours discussing this very issue on the Great Representation programme. The editors have decided to respect the language choice of the contributing authors, as we are of the firm opinion that it is important for each school to determine its own agreed language and terminology that works for its school community and context.

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The schools joining the Great Representation programme in September 2023 did so for a variety of reasons, and they were motivated by different factors. Some schools had noticed an increasing mismatch between the ethnic diversity of their student and staff/governor/trustee bodies and were seeking strategies to address this. Some were looking for inspiration for diversifying and decolonising their curriculums. Some were keen to facilitate discussions about race in their schools but nervous and unsure as to how to go about it. Some wanted to develop the racial literacy of their staff and students.

Leaders at **St Mary's**, for example, spoke of seeking support, guidance and inspiration around:

- decolonising the curriculum, identifying the biases and limitations of current curriculum content
- addressing any race inequality in our school
- developing confidence in appropriate language around race and identity
- celebrating diversity of the ethnic groups within the school, ensuring they are well represented in the school community and through leadership roles

As with cohorts 1 and 2, leaders on Great Representation in 2023–4 quickly realised and started to benefit from the power of the relationships formed with colleagues in their hub groups and the visits to each other's schools.

We greatly value the insights we gain from both visiting other schools and the discussions we can have with staff and visiting speakers.

#### – Crabtree

Colleagues are keen to help and support each other, not only in relation to the Great Representation programme but also by sharing good practice and ideas more generally.

#### – Parmiter's

Completing our first school hub visit was enlightening and extremely beneficial. It allowed us to witness successful strategies used to promote diversity through school values first-hand. Being able to give feedback, ask questions and discuss observational points was invaluable.

Discussions within our hub group paved a way for helpful, open discussions regarding:

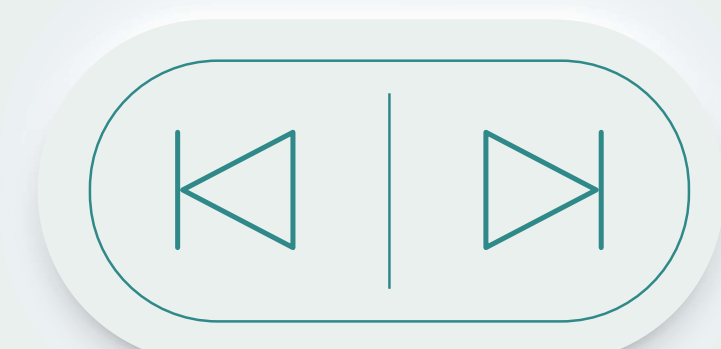
- personal experiences
- unease, use of vocabulary
- our own settings
- what we hope to achieve through the programme

#### – Woodlands

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As we gathered together and reflected [at our final school visit], it was clear that the relationships, trust and support between us have developed since we embarked on this experience together. We have asked probing questions; supported one another; and, most importantly, been open and honest about our schools, about us as school leaders and about the path that each of us continues on.

– **Holy Family**

We have felt bolstered by the trust and accountability developed amongst peers on this programme and seek to continue developing these professional relationships.

– **Maple Cross**

All of the reflective journals in this volume speak of course participants' learning around issues of race. For many leaders who have no lived experience of racism, hearing the accounts of both keynote speakers and fellow delegates has been eye-opening. Over the year – through reading, reflecting, discussing and collecting feedback from pupils, staff and parents – they have noticed more, seen things differently, and deepened their understanding of race and race equity:

The first Great Representation session was an eye-opener for us as. Although race equity was a whole-school priority, we hadn't thought much beyond surface changes. We were now having conversations and provoking each other around the deeper issues and how we could ensure that the children in our schools do not grow up to accept what we all accepted when we were growing up. We want our children to call out the racism, prejudice and discrimination they see and hear from a place of knowledge, passion and love; and ultimately change society for the better. As school leaders, we now see this as our mission and part of our duty to educate.

– **Bushey Federation**

The course is making us notice more what is going on around us. We feel we have opened our eyes and are now seeing when our Black children have been most engaged; this has been when they are seeing Black figures. As a result, we are working on improving representation, for example in assemblies, and ensuring that book covers with Black characters are front facing in the library.

– **Poppy Academy Trust**

Regarding Sufian Sadiq speaking about the Israel–Gaza conflict:

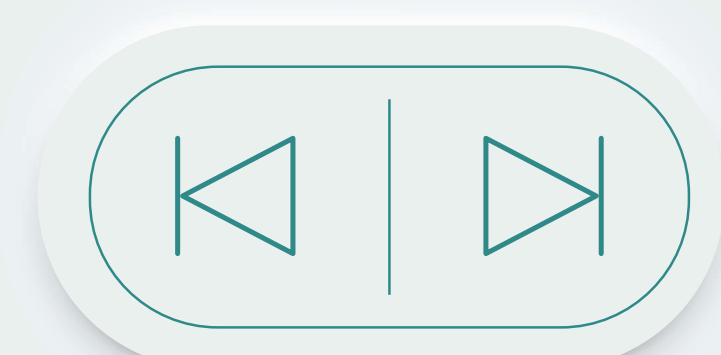
While we were watching the news, hearing the news, reading the newspapers, the issue was not all-consuming to us. It didn't resonate in the same way as it did for him because of our different lived experience. It was horrific to us but it wasn't personal, as it was for him. We reflected on the differences in our lived experiences and the impact this has on our work on racial equity.

– **Harpenden**

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Now that we are talking more to children and parents of colour about their backgrounds and experiences of school, we are developing an uncomfortable understanding that, for many, racism is more of an issue than we had realised.

– **Wormley**

A comment that particularly struck us was the notion that students from ethnic minority groups may face danger at every decision-making point; without consideration, we may as educators be inadvertently preventing students from progressing because of the decisions we make. Whilst these decisions may be well intentioned, if we do not approach them through a diversity lens, we run the risk of creating a ceiling that is difficult to push through. We have been mindful of this in some of the conversations we have had in school this week around options subjects and future pathways, recognising that our words and actions can have a powerful effect on achievement in the future.

– **Leventhorpe**

We, as leaders, need to challenge the microaggressions of children, staff and parents, by having conversations when someone says or does something that is not OK. We need to challenge our own unconscious bias and understand how to speak to others who may be entrenched in their views. We need to include all voices that disrupt inequalities and tackle racism wherever it is present.

– **Thorn Grove**

This course is so valuable, because it opens up questions and thoughts that we haven't even been aware of and may never have occurred to us before. This is critical to us as school leaders, because if we are aware then we can make sure that we are empowering, advocating and creating active citizens that can challenge any racism and can make a difference to someone's day-to-day existence.

– **Harpenden**

In the journals many of the authors identify key learning:

We have realised that ensuring our curriculum is diverse and inclusive is a process and not just a task.

– **Holy Family**

Despite making what we believe to be a strong start on this very long journey, we now realise more than ever the enormity of the task in hand.

– **Wood End**

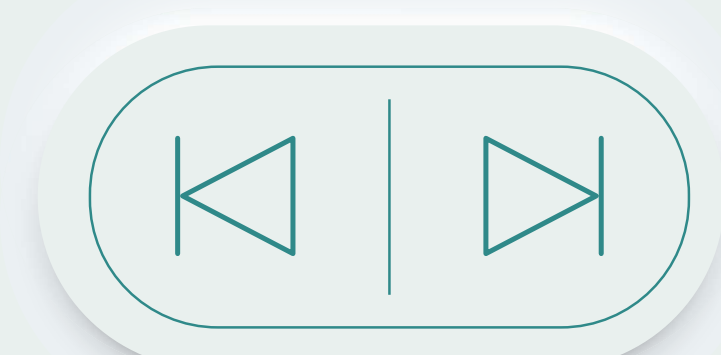
There will always be racism and sections of society who partake actively, passively or unconsciously in it. This makes us more determined to teach ourselves, our staff, our children and our families about the importance of diversity in society and to embrace difference, rather than seeing it as a threat or something to be afraid of.

– **Oaklands**

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We need a critical mass to make change. We need to work together with like-minded people to share ideas and experiences so that we can fully understand and find solutions for the issues we face.

– **Thorn Grove**

There will be times when the work just feels too hard, and it is during those times that we must remember our privilege and therefore our responsibility in this work.

– **Mount Grace**

The only way we can understand racism is by talking about it and avoiding the mindset of *Because we do not see it, it doesn't exist here*.

– **Crabtree**

In terms of the anti-racism agenda ... if we want to effect change, it needs to be led from the top, with clear expectations around the need to change curriculum, systems and processes to ensure coherence and purpose.

– **Leventhorpe**

The reflective journals tell the stories of the impact of leaders' learning on their schools' policies, practices, education offer, websites and systems. They describe changes to and impact on staff training, talking to and educating pupils about race, dealing with racist incidents, communicating to and working with families, the use of data, policies, the curriculum, the physical environment, strategic planning and appraisal, working with governors, celebrating festivals and marking key events:

## TRAINING

Staff discussion – to develop understanding and ensure that all are confident and competent to effectively address racism issues – has now been built into our training schedule.

– **St Thomas More**

We debated the use of language and the difference between young children's curiosity, their clumsy use of language and the intention to offend.

– **Leverstock Green**

Beginning with *Wish We Knew What to Say* by Dr Pragya Agarwal and *Diversity in Schools* by Bennie Kara, our staff are equipping themselves with the knowledge and language to confidently converse on the topic of race.

– **Maple Cross**

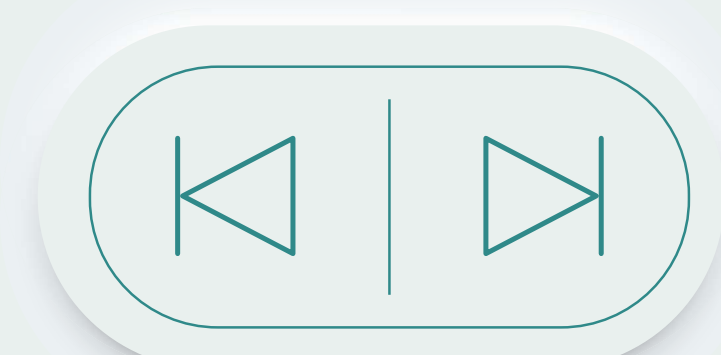
We led a staff meeting replicating some of the activities we have completed on the course. ... We also posed a number of questions including, *Are you sure you are not racist?* We challenged the staff to think of 30 racist attitudes. It was here that staff began sharing their own experiences.

– **Poppy Academy Trust**

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## TALKING WITH PUPILS

Talking about race and religion, learning about differences and encouraging respectful disagreement is how we can grow as a school community, ensuring our school is a place where everyone belongs.

### – Pope Paul

Our current key message is *Let's talk*. Let us talk about issues that can be uncomfortable to discuss such as conflict and racism.

### – Holy Family

We looked at the assembly that had been planned for Remembrance Day and, rather than delivering a generic message about peace, we made sure that we were explicitly mentioning Gaza in the assembly and praying for peace. We also adapted the weekly newsletter to reference Gaza. Within our Remembrance Day displays, both in the hall and outside, we lit candles to remember the children killed in Gaza.

### – St Philip Howard

## DEALING WITH RACIST INCIDENTS

[We] took time to discuss different types of racism, categorising:

- victimisation
- covert racism
- harassment
- discrimination
- overt racism

We were able to reflect on the need for clear policies for consistency, and the comparison of time spent investigating an incident versus time supporting the victim. It was beneficial to look in-depth at some mistakes that have been made in school investigations, focusing on the key concepts of bias, adultification, invisibility and hypervisibility. Ultimately, we need to listen, support, report and monitor all incidents.

### – Woodlands

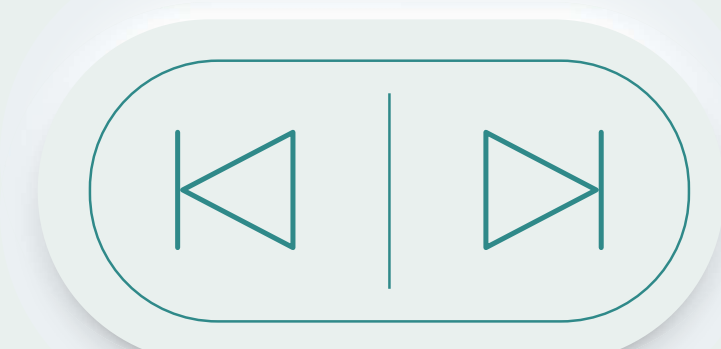
There was also an instance of the use of racist language in class and, having attended Great Representation, we were much better able to handle the situation, feeling more empowered and finding a solution more effectively.

### – Leverstock Green

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We have reviewed our reporting arrangements of racist incidents, looking deeper into the reasons a child has made an unacceptable comment. We have improved our parental input into the exploration of incidents and the follow-up work that we do with the children or class involved. This has led to children feeling much happier and more confident that the *little things* – the microaggressions – will not be ignored or tolerated.

– **St Philip Howard**

We realise that our previous approach when addressing incidents of discrimination was reactive, often involving standalone lessons. ... Together with the English lead, [the assistant headteacher] created a series of lessons for English and guided reading to support the class teachers in focusing on language. Pupils are building their racial literacy, developing the vocabulary to discuss each of the protected characteristics ... and what it means to be an upstander or a bystander.

– **Chater**

## VOICE ACTIVITY

Following on from our increased work on diversity in school, we decided to include some targeted questions in our staff questionnaire, which was sent out in November:

- Do you feel confident talking about race and skin colour with children? If not, what would help you?
- How can we promote and celebrate different cultures and heritage within our school community?

– **Hillshott**

A pupil voice session with our children on the day of our counterparts' visit felt somewhat lacking in terms of how we got the children to open up or think about racism. We therefore became more mindful of the need to develop our ability to probe and ask the right questions of the right children. This led to discussions about how we dig deeper with our children.

– **Bushey Federation**

In carrying out pupil voice activity with a range of students, the following questions have helped us see any gaps and areas for focus:

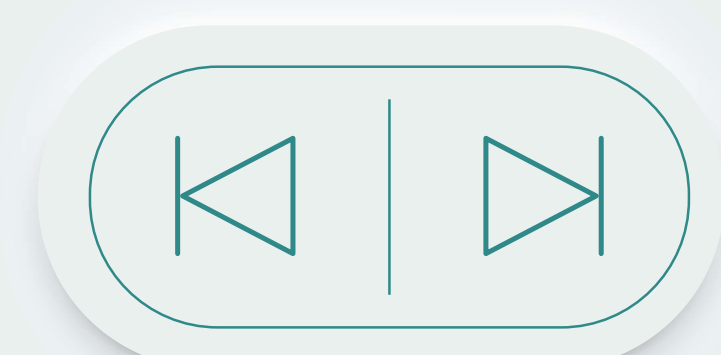
- Who are your role models?
- What are your ambitions for when you are older?
- Who inspires you?
- Is there anyone who looks like you who inspires you?
- Where do you see people that look like you?
- Who do you relate to?

– **Woodlands**

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Our conversations in the staff meeting illustrated just how little we know about our community and the experiences of those in it. As a result, we have created an action to survey our BAME children, staff and parents.

– **Hollybush**

## PARENTAL COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

We sent a communication home reiterating our stance on discriminatory behaviour and the steps that we have in place to ensure that any such incidents are dealt with effectively and severely. This letter provided students and parents with clarity and will act as a reference point when dealing with any discriminatory incidents.

– **Ridgeway**

We had invited parents to meet with us to support us in our vision of making our school curriculum more diverse ...

“This year, one of our key priorities is to look at our school ethos and curriculum, to ensure they reflect diversity within our school community. We would like to set up a working group of parents to help us on this journey and would appreciate some open and honest dialogue in sharing ideas and helping us move forward. If you would like to be part of our working group, please indicate which afternoon would be best for you, for an initial meeting.”

We explained that a more diverse curriculum would allow all children:

- to be seen in the curriculum
- to interrogate how knowledge in the curriculum has come to be valued
- to hear multiple co-existing narratives in all subjects

All of the parents engaged in our discussion and were supportive of what we were aiming to achieve.

– **Wood End**

We now have a working group, with parent involvement. Our school development plan has aims around ensuring that the curriculum is diverse, inclusive and representative of the community at Thorn Grove, and around supporting staff and children to have the confidence to discuss race and ethnicity and to have an appreciation of unconscious bias. This ensures all stakeholders are held to account.

– **Thorn Grove**

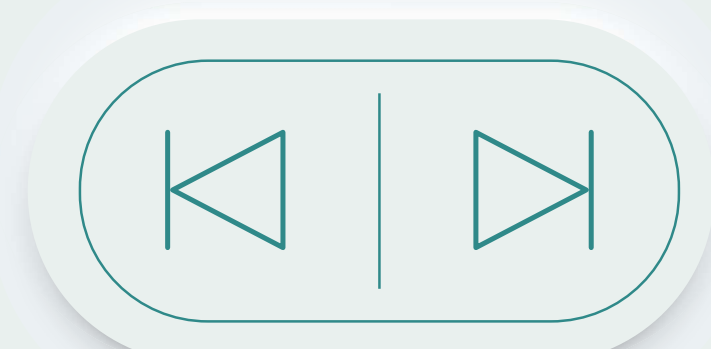
We had already developed parental engagement at Roebuck by hosting an International Day in the autumn term, which was organised by a member of staff who has developed a strong network of supportive parents. ... We feel inspired to deliver a bigger and better International Day to share with the wider community at Roebuck. Plans are already underway to make sure that our International Day will be on a larger scale, to make it a real celebration of the cultures of Roebuck’s diverse community.

– **Roebuck**

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## PARENTAL COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

We have shared the aims of our Great Representations project with the governing body and included it as an item on a recent meeting agenda. Some governors have engaged in race equality and anti-racism training. We shared incidents of racism, and governors asked curious questions to challenge our responses and develop their understanding.

### – Wormley

We now have a representation champion on our school governing body. This is to make sure that policies and decisions we make reflect what we are trying to change. He has come into school and spent a morning with our senior leadership team, to develop his understanding of what this course is about and how his role can impact our governors going forward.

### – St Philip Howard

A strong governor link for this work meant that leaders at all levels were owning the collective responsibility and priority that race equity needs.

### – Mount Grace

## DATA ANALYSIS

The importance of *counting* was also highlighted. For example, counting the number of staff members on the senior or middle leadership team that were from underrepresented backgrounds, or counting the number of exclusions that have been issued to children of colour compared with their White counterparts.

### – Ridgeway

We record the number of incidents, times, dates and those involved on CPOMS to track patterns. The numbers of incidents are shared with governors in the headteacher reports. This is something we have always done, but we are now drilling down into the numbers and putting greater emphasis on the impact counting can have on individuals and groups.

### – Thorn Grove

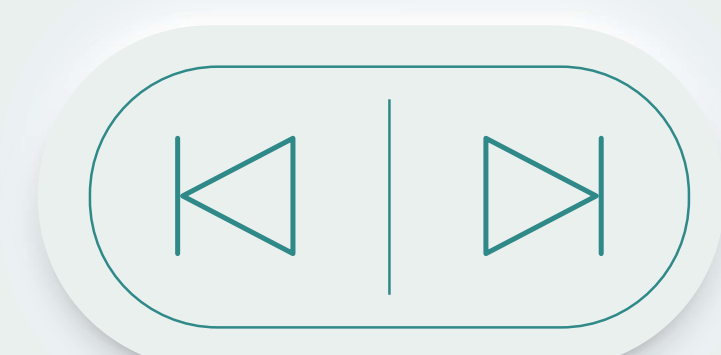
Remembering David Gillborn's plea that we "count within our context", we wondered if the events of 7 October 2023 have impacted on the number of incidents of Islamophobia and antisemitism at school. The reality is, we don't know. ... Could we sub-group racist incidents so that we could easily see patterns and link them to what is happening in the community or the wider world at any given time? Our instinct suggests yes.

### – Mount Grace

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## POLICY ANALYSIS

We are starting a process of scrutinising our policies and procedures to ensure that they address racism.

### – St Thomas More

We have begun to develop an anti-racism policy, which will include a flowchart of how we respond to racist incidents. When incidents have occurred previously, they have always been dealt with fairly and thoroughly, with parents being informed of the process. The flowchart will remind staff of steps to take and will reassure parents that we do not tolerate racism. The policy will be available on our website when it is completed. This will also be added to our induction for all staff.

### – Hillshott

## APPRAISAL AND TARGET SETTING

We have prioritised this work as part of both the school development plan and our appraisal, to ensure that the appropriate time is given.

### – Woodlands

Staff appraisals now include a race equity target

### – Thorn Grove

When creating their action plans for the year, subject leaders were required to factor in an anti-racist action. Actions included promoting diversity within STEM and challenging existing stereotypes of certain disciplines and professions. We are excited to see these take root throughout the year as the project becomes further embedded in the school.

### – Maple Cross

## THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

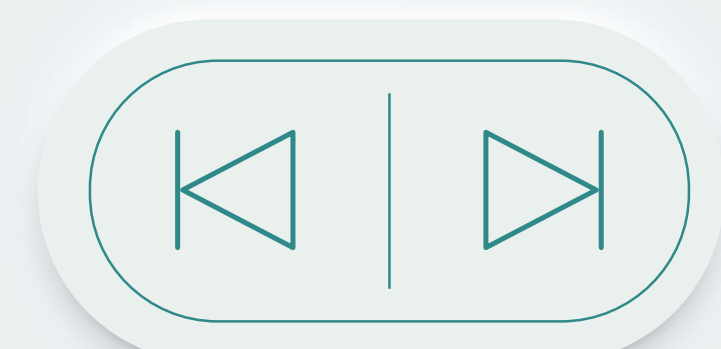
We have created displays that include artefacts that reflect and represent our community. Some parents have contributed to these displays. The displays include literature and images that celebrate different backgrounds. We have added multilingual texts. There are also traditional items from family homes; for example, we have household items donated by Turkish families, including teapots, cups, the evil eye for the front of the door, and slippers. ... A child was browsing at one of the displays. He showed how the teapots are used at his home to make Turkish tea and explained how visitors are given slippers to wear when they arrive at his house.

### – Wormley

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We used the opportunity of consultation evening to invite parents to complete our survey and have now had about 50% of the school's families respond. We have used the data to create a display, showcasing where our families are from and the languages they speak. This has allowed us to discover new information about our children, and the response from them to the display has been really positive.

– **St Rose's**

To put the project at the forefront of everyone's minds, we created a display in the school foyer featuring historical Black figures. The display offers challenging questions and thought-provoking ideas. It includes cut-outs of hands in different skin tones with written commitments by staff and governors alike on how they will contribute to the project. Below the display is a beautiful collection of books with Black and Brown main characters, children's books about racism, and books about different religious beliefs and people from different walks of life.

– **Maple Cross**

The RE lead also drew on the knowledge of a Hindu teaching assistant (TA) to ensure accurate information was delivered, as well as correct pronunciation of key vocabulary. The TA became involved in the planning of the assembly, brought in artefacts from home and produced a presentation of photographs to refer to during the assembly from her own family's celebrations. She spoke afterwards of how she felt valued being asked for help and what it meant for her to see lots of children in their traditional clothing in assembly. We reflected that if an adult feels that way, then it stands to reason that the children will have had similar reactions and feelings when experiencing their culture and heritage being showcased to the whole school.

– **Oaklands**

## THE CURRICULUM

It is also important to make sure diversity is fully integrated into the sequence of the curriculum and not perceived as a bolt-on that had no impact; and not to shoehorn in content with the sole purpose of ticking a diversity box. The challenge of enabling students to spend time to fully explore diversity, whilst at the same time teaching the curriculum in the time constraints of GCSE and A level, is significant, but it is a challenge we feel it vital to overcome in creating an inclusive school.

– **Roundwood Park**

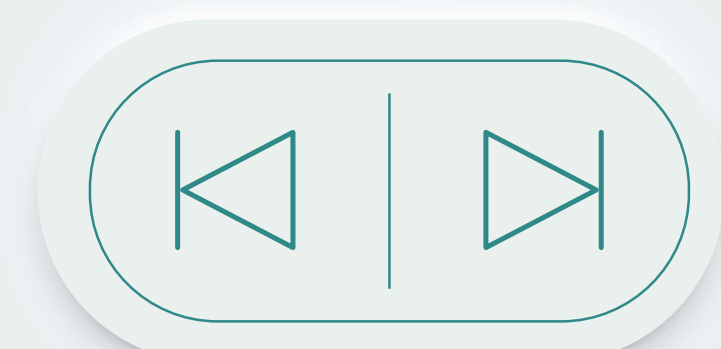
The impact of resourcing was instant. Children began speaking more openly about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and they were demonstrating more interest in customs and features of others. Cultural understanding and awareness increased.

– **Woodlands**

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## CELEBRATING FESTIVALS

We have been able to start creating a list of dates that we should be aware of such as important feast days and national days of celebration. Although it may not be possible to celebrate each one with a theme day, we will be able to ensure that they are acknowledged for pupils and included in our calendar. Plans are already in place to celebrate Chinese New Year with a themed lunch and activities in school. We will be reaching out to parents to help us to plan and deliver these activities.

### – St Rose’s

It is key that we take advantage of significant events and aspirational figures within our curriculum to embed diversity and that, for each topic taught, there will be figures and stories from a variety of different cultures. Our children need to have a sense of belonging and, to achieve this, they need to see themselves in their learning each day and in all subjects.

### – Pope Paul

Our working group is organising a cultural heritage project, which will celebrate the diversity of our stakeholders and their wider families. We want to know more about how music, stories, dance and food shape different cultures, and about what is important in those cultures. We hope this event will make all our families feel part of something and experience a connection with others that is currently missing. We will then be able to use this knowledge to weave elements into our curriculum and to celebrate all festivals that are important to our stakeholders, such as Vaisakhi, Eid, Diwali, Lunar New Year and Passover. We cannot just decide which ones we think are important to include – we need to talk to our families to find that out. We need to model the importance of belonging through our actions.

### – Thorn Grove

## THE WEBSITE

We decided to make a change to our school website, adding the strapline *There’s a place for you here*, alongside our motto of educating hearts and minds.

### – Harpenden

Most of the journals end with leaders’ reflections on their key learning from the programme. Here are just a few:

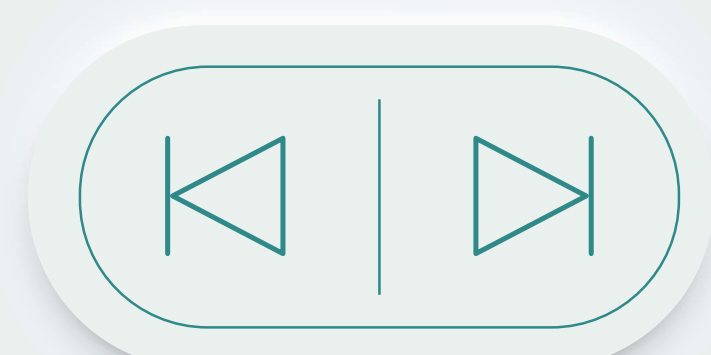
When we began, back in September, EDI issues were very much the elephant in the room. Through the confidence gained on this programme, we have brought these issues out into the open and have begun to tackle them. There is no quick fix, and we expect to have EDI as a key feature of our school development plan for years to come. We have learned as a staff not to be afraid to have conversations around race equity, and we are learning to be more aware of the biases that we all carry with us, the impact that these can have on other members of our community, and to adjust our approaches accordingly.

### – Nobel

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Here are the most influential learnings:

- We all have bias and privilege that we must recognise and own.
- Safe spaces to discuss race equity are essential.
- We need to make the effort to go outside your comfort zone and try and understand an alternate perspective.
- We should have confidence to use appropriate language and trust from others when the language may not be quite right.
- Picture books are so influential and accessible for primary-aged children.
- We need to listen to the children.
- We should collaborate with other schools and learn from their experiences.

#### – **Wormley**

Children and staff are being taken on a journey of discovery, and it may well be the case that in future we choose to approach race equity in a more overt manner. At times, it has felt to us as though we have avoided some of the potentially challenging conversations and responses by choosing the approach we have. However, we felt it was important for our staff to be taken on this journey in a gentler way. There has been a subtle shift in the culture of the school.

#### – **Oaklands**

The emotional impact that the seminars deliver creates this impetus to *Go, go, go!*, but it has been important to ensure we have the arsenal needed to increase confidence in staff and to bring challenging discussions to the forefront of everyone's actions and minds.

#### – **Maple Cross**

Developing our racial literacy doesn't mean that we will ever have all the answers, nor would we be expected to. It means that we can feel more confident to have these important discussions and can feel more comfortable dealing with issues around racism as they arise.

#### – **Pope Paul**

This project is not something that finishes after the year – it is just the starting point. The significant difference it has made to us as leaders is that we now look at the decisions we make through a different lens.

#### – **St Philip Howard**

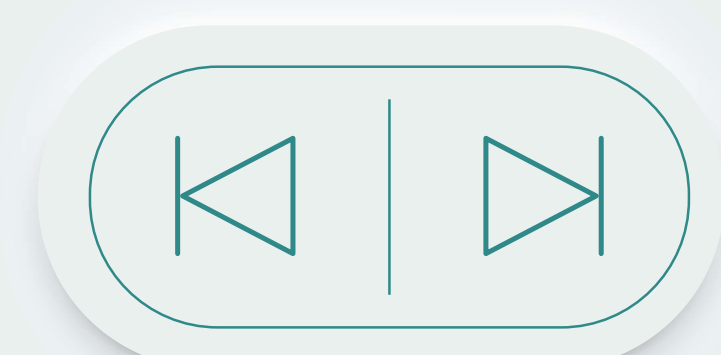
We don't want our school to just not be racist; we want it to be anti-racist – a school that challenges, with leaders who listen and leaders who are committed to never giving up for the children who need us the most.

#### – **Hollybush**

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We believe that our role as early educators is vitally important. We are in a privileged position to be able to educate and guide children towards a greater understanding of race equity.

– **Hillshott**

Over the last several months, our definition of *success* from this programme has changed. We now think it is not purely about completing this course successfully, but more about our understanding of how we can continue to progress at Crabtree to help us embed an anti-racist culture at the school.

– **Crabtree**

We hope you will enjoy and be inspired by the journals in this publication.

*Rachel Macfarlane*

July 2024

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# REFLECTIVE JOURNALS.

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# BUSHEY PRIMARY EDUCATION FEDERATION

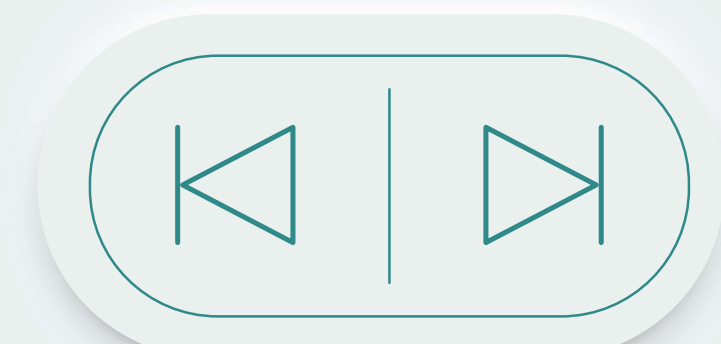
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## September 2023

Bushey Primary Education Federation is made up of two schools: Bushey and Oxhey Infant School, and Bushey Manor Junior School. Both are two-form-entry schools, and they are on different sites, hold different UPN numbers and are subject to separate Ofsted inspections. Within the federation, the leadership team works across both schools; the staff move across the two sites; and there are rich opportunities for staff development and CPD, given the different school cultures, school approaches and school settings.

The federation is situated in the commuter belt of Bushey, with many of the pupils' parents working in London. Almost 70% of the children and families identify as White British, leaving 30% from ethnic minority/world majority and mixed-heritage backgrounds. The second largest group of children within our schools are of Indian heritage. Our staff makeup does not reflect the families we serve, with only 9% of staff from minority ethnic groups. We do not have any staff of Indian heritage, but our federation deputy headteacher is a Black Caribbean woman. Our governing board is made up entirely of White British people.

In the spring term of 2023 Shammi Rahman, an HFL Education race equality adviser, carried out a commissioned school visit at Bushey Manor Junior School, the visit focusing on our approaches to race equality. Shammi spent a morning with the leadership team, our children and some of our subject leaders. Her report was interesting and illustrated the many things we were doing well. However, the actions reflected our deepening desire to be even better and to give this work status as part of our strategic planning for the development of our federation and our schools.

We regularly talk to our children about their learning. However, until the commissioned school visit, we hadn't spoken to them so directly about diversity and representation. Shammi Rahman conducted a tour of the school with a group of children, and they reflected with her that they did not really see themselves in the books and stories that were our key texts in our classes. Although we had invested heavily in texts that were more representative, these sat on feature shelves in libraries or in boxes for focus work. They were not routinely available on classroom shelves or in the curriculum.

The teachers and subject leaders heard what the children were saying and went straight to work, finding good texts that were diverse and better reflected and represented the heritage and family makeup of our children. We now have a range of core texts like *Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow* by Benjamin Dean embedded in our English curriculum, and staff are continually adding books to our school shelves that are representative of all within our school community.

Over the past three years, we have written and developed our own school curriculum. An area where we asked for Shammi Rahman to support us with was our history curriculum. We changed it to ensure the periods of history that were studied were viewed from other perspectives, for example the Indian Army's contributions to World War II, as well as developing a range of resources that were increasingly diverse and representative. We had always taught *The Mayans*. We wanted to change this, and Shammi helped and supported us in this aim. Now, instead of

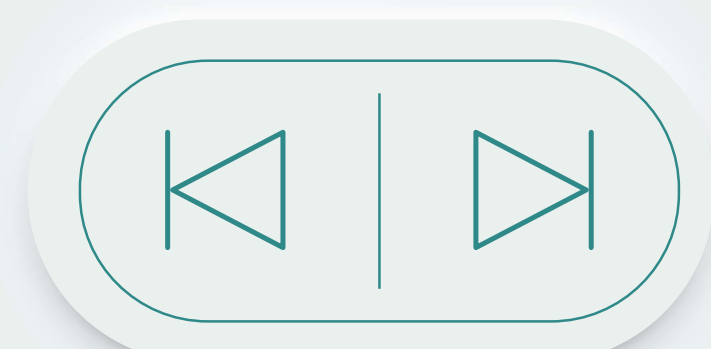
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studying the Mayan civilisation, our Year 6 children study early Islamic civilisation. It is much more important that children understand a rich history that impacts on current world views and, more importantly, reflects on the history and culture of so many within our own schools and society.

After receiving the commissioned school visit report, we reflected on the experience, the actions and recommendations, and on our own motivation to ensure change and bring staff on board with us. Along with other schools local to us, we commissioned a staff survey from Edurio to specifically look at our approaches and staff understanding of themes linked to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). The results of the survey didn't tell us much about what our staff really thought, and we sensed that we might have moved too soon and not provided a context for staff to fully engage and understand the purpose of the exercise. We decided in the summer term of 2023 that EDI would be a main priority on our school development plan for the 2023–24 school year.

Our September whole-staff INSET day was delivered by the renowned speaker and leader in her field, Hannah Wilson from Diverse Educators. This was a thought-provoking session for all staff. It was at times uncomfortable, but it was very informative and the perfect way to set the tone for the year ahead for all staff.

Further pupil voice sessions were carried out after a discussion with some of our Year 5 children, who had questions about our religious education curriculum. They had ideas that really challenged our approaches and made us consider why we hadn't explored those areas before. One child said, "We would like a quiet prayer space in school." Another said, "It is the small things that make a difference. We celebrate and decorate the school at Christmas time; why do we not do the same for other religious festivals?" The children outlined to us how the systems and culture of the school made them feel as though they were sitting on the outside and that no one was truly seeking to make them feel as though they belonged.

The children raised interesting points, and we knew that our RE curriculum needed some attention. We reached out to Shammi Rahman at HFL Education again, as she has worked as an RE teacher and has years of experience in teaching and leading RE at secondary school level. She agreed to support us, and she then worked with our RE leader and delivered a staff CPD session, which staff found inspiring. Her knowledge, the links she could make with the wider curriculum, and the way she stressed the importance of a well-planned and well-delivered RE curriculum were really appreciated by our staff. Her session stimulated good thinking and created a momentum and desire for change within our staff. The important step we had initially missed – in helping staff see how diversity and representation needed to be embedded in our school and community – was finally addressed, and our work was making sense to our staff.

The video that Shammi shared with us, "Nobody Stands Nowhere" (from RE:Online) particularly resonated as a theme of RE connecting everyone, through understanding our common humanity. Our RE curriculum is still in the development phase. We do follow the Herts Agreed Syllabus, but we are keen to make it our own in terms of developing the content to better reflect the faith communities we have in our federation schools, in much the same way as we have done with other curriculum areas.

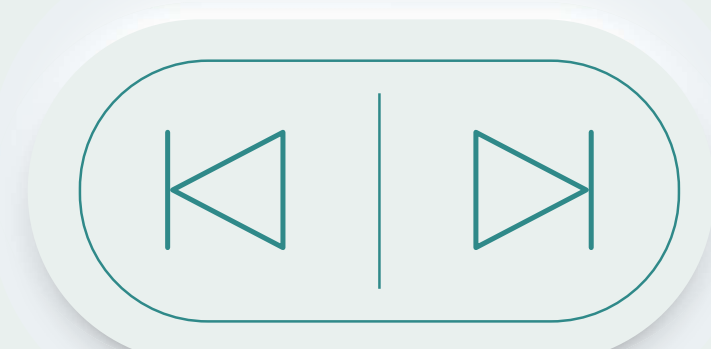
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A key quote from Shammi, which now sits in our staffroom, is: “RE transforms the landscape for helping us understand each other.”

Our first Great Representation face-to-face session was interesting and afforded us clearer insight into the work that can be achieved when we are all driving forward together, with better clarity and a focused momentum for equity and inclusion in our schools. The workshop, led by Professor Paul Miller, was thought-provoking. It led us to think about how equity and inclusion become part of who we are as a school, going deeper than what might be viewed as tokenistic books on the bookshelf and minor changes here and there in the curriculum. Instead, we can strive to become a fully inclusive and anti-racist school.

The statistics around systemic race inequality in modern society and our schools were shocking and something we knew we wanted to tackle head-on. When we got back to school, we looked again at our school development plan and spoke to the children and staff from minority ethnic groups. We asked their opinions, and these helped to frame priorities and the implementation of these priorities.

The first Great Representation session was an eye-opener for us as. Although race equity was a whole-school priority, we hadn't thought much beyond surface changes. We were now having conversations and provoking each other around the deeper issues and how we could ensure that the children in our schools do not grow up to accept what we all accepted when we were growing up. We want our children to call out the racism, prejudice and discrimination they see and hear from a place of knowledge, passion and love; and ultimately change society for the better. As school leaders, we now see this as our mission and part of our duty to educate.

### October 2023

We organised a staff CPD session in which we spoke to our teachers about the Great Representation programme and again shared our school development plan. We asked for thoughts and feedback and reflected together on what the children had said and the actions we had already put in place. Staff have met more regularly with our Black and minority ethnic/world majority children and formed an EDI group with them. This is something we want to grow further as the year progresses.

We had a racist incident between some children in October, which led us to think hard about how we *reach* our families. The biggest piece of learning this provided was that we have children that are growing up in households where parents do not understand the implications of words and how these words land with families of ethnic minority/world majority groups. It led us to want to ensure all our children understand what life is like for those people with less privilege than themselves.

In meetings with parents to discuss the racist incident, it was alarming (and saddening) to us to talk with families who were completely unwilling to see or accept that the actions of their child could be viewed as racist. We took a stronger line than we might otherwise have done, as we better understand the moral imperative on us to help families see that the language used was racist. There was no judgement or recrimination around that; it was a fact.

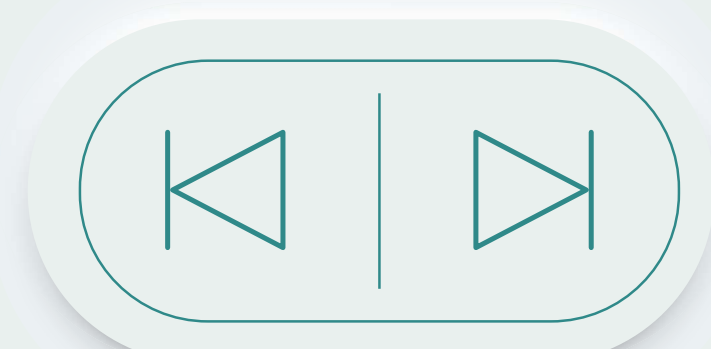
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We have to teach our children – ideally in tandem between home and school – but if that can't be the case, we will certainly follow the pathway we are on. Teaching our children at the point of the mistake is powerful and necessary. Our children are open to learning, but not all our parents are. The incident was painful for all involved – the victim, perpetrator, both families, and us. It highlighted to us that work in this area needs to be done with our children and also with our families. It is important this is not done in a “preachy” or patronising way.

As we move through this programme, we wish to focus on developing this aspect of our work and will look to add this to our school development planning. It is becoming clear that in our messaging around inclusion, we are not being specific or targeted enough in our work on anti-racism. Anti-racism has to sit as something distinct and different, or it becomes lost.

We have made a point of reaching out to members of our school community who are underrepresented in governance and asking them to consider joining our board. We have been actively working on this and have now successfully recruited our first non-White member of the governing board. More work needs to be done in this area, but we have made a start. We are looking to work with other professionals in this field because we want to hear a range of voices and approaches in our training on anti-racism as the year progresses.

Next week we are hoping to meet with Krystal Rubie from the company Young People Aspire Higher, for her to lead some anti-racist training with our staff. Krystal was recommended to us by the parent whose child suffered racism in our school in the incident described above. The parent is a teacher, and she spoke of how Krystal's work helped to breed a confidence in teachers within her own setting, in dealing with racism and teaching anti-racism in an inclusive way.

We have determined that, in building on the work of Hannah Wilson with our staff, we need to narrow down the focus from broader work on inclusion (although this remains important – just distinct and different), into clearer and more urgent messages that specifically target anti-racism.

### November 2023

We set up a meeting with Krystal Rubie, who talked us through her work and her approach. She explained in a subsequent INSET planning meeting that she doesn't reference White privilege, believing that to be overused and alienating in the discourse and delivery of anti-racism training to staff in schools. As a Black educator, who is on the receiving end of a range of anti-racism training courses, she has strong views on what will have an impact and what is piecemeal, tokenistic or lacking in substance.

We have booked a day of training from Krystal on 3 May 2024. This is after the Great Representation programme ends, but it should help to secure and embed our ongoing aim to deepen our understanding of racism and look again at more impactful approaches. Our work to embed a strongly anti-racist school culture has begun, but we know the work will be continuous and ongoing. It will also need the commitment of all staff to lead and drive it onwards from a place of understanding and knowledge. Great Representation is giving us this knowledge; our work now is to embed this within our school organisation and culture.

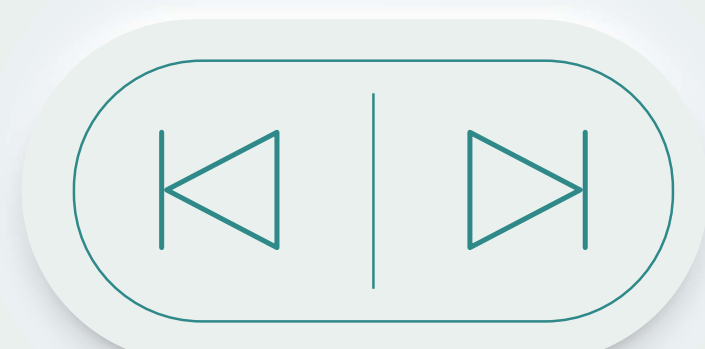
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Within our Great Representation hub group (a way of working that puts groups of schools together to visit, reflect and journey through this course in tandem), we hosted the first of the group visits. It was good to welcome counterparts into school, and the key takeaway from the day for us was the thinking around how we best talk to our children about anti-racism.

A pupil voice session with our children on the day of our colleagues' visit felt somewhat lacking in terms of how we got the children to open up or think about racism. We therefore became more mindful of the need to develop our ability to probe and ask the right questions of the right children. This led to discussions about how we dig deeper with our children. Pupil voice sessions can sometimes be "woolly", or children will tell us what they think we want to hear. How are we talking to our children, and should we choose a variety of children from a range of backgrounds? Or should we talk specifically to those from minority ethnic/world majority heritages?

### December 2023

A visit to The Holy Family Catholic Primary School in Welwyn Garden City was helpful in seeing how another school is developing its work in this area. The school had a focus on the theme of *belonging*, which – although couched in the strong Christian values and Catholic ethos permeating the school – offered many commonalities in our thinking and ideas on how to share and promote this work within our school community. This was our first visit, and we look forward to seeing the other schools in our group and how their thinking as part of Great Representation comes to fruition in the projects, reflections and initiatives they are engaged in.

December saw the third of our Great Representation face-to-face sessions. Once again, we heard a rich array of speakers and commentators reflecting on issues linked to race and education. It was useful to hear from a previous headteacher who had undertaken the Great Representation journey, and to learn of the initiatives that his school employed around safe spaces.

A current headteacher on the course alongside us reflected on an issue where he felt he had got messaging wrong related to Middle East stereotyping, and the aftermath of anger and frustration from families in the Muslim community that he had to counter, support and overcome. This was thought-provoking, and his openness and vulnerability in sharing his errors and what he might have done differently were helpful and useful. Like the children, we all learn from our mistakes.

The talk by Bennie Kara was inspirational and built very much on the messages and work we have been doing following our initial INSET with her colleague from Diverse Educators, Hannah Wilson. The final speaker on Day 3 was a colleague who had previously undertaken the Great Representation programme and discovered something of herself and her truth in the content, talks and materials that had been shared. There was a pain in her voice, which gave rise to a feeling of discomfort.

One of the project participants from our school, who is a parent of children of mixed heritage, was struck by the fact that the speaker spoke in a very binary way about her experiences growing up and her inability to feel she belonged, stating that "she was neither White nor Black".

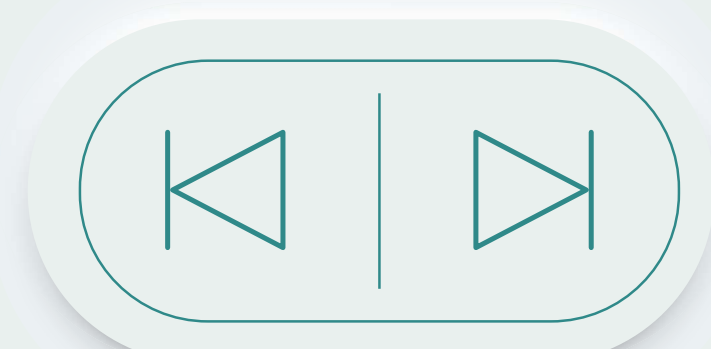
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We reflected that there had to be some reason why she couldn't or didn't want to identify as mixed heritage – why she felt she needed to be one thing or another. She spoke of the racism she faced as a mixed-race child, and it was clear she was holding on to past hurts as an adult, and that their impact was immense.

Reflecting on that final talk raised issues for us about balancing sensitivity with honesty. Dancing around issues related to race and being scared to offend has done so much damage in the past. However, we remember the words of previous speakers at Great Representation seminars, particularly Bennie Kara, who encouraged us to *lean into* the conversation, topic or issues of race with confidence, whenever or however they occur.

We considered that there will always be a possibility to offend, but that – particularly in a primary school and in the relationships that are built with young children – we shouldn't be afraid to talk about, celebrate, love and share what makes us different. Therefore, what we need to do better is communicate this school culture to parents and make them aware from the outset and in regular messaging from school that, should they need to come to talk to us if they feel slighted, hurt or upset by conversations or comments made to their child, we are open and desire these conversations to take place in an open and positive way. This is the *leaning in* that is needed; and we are currently thinking about how it is best communicated to both our existing parents and the new parents joining us.

In conjunction with staff, and in our INSET this month, we looked at our existing anti-racism statement and began to formulate a revised and updated anti-racism policy and approach.

### January/February 2024

At the next face-to-face session, as part of our Great Representation journey, we were particularly inspired by the words of David Gillborn, emeritus professor of Critical Race Studies at Birmingham University. He spoke on the theme of “Racism and education” and challenged us as school leaders to think about what we can realistically do about racism in our schools. He also illustrated the deep-seated and ongoing nature of the power perspectives and systemic obstacles that hinder our pathways to progress as educational practitioners within wider societal systems.

Professor Gillborn explained that he has worked for over 20 years in the field of critical race theory. However, he now sees that field of research and study wholly demonised and viewed with suspicion, due to underlying (and in some cases quite overt) political messaging, which seeks to undermine and diminish the work and thinking that is produced in this field.

His words gave rise to some discussions and reflections back at school around how issues of race and racism need to be carefully constructed within our schools. This is because the baseline from Professor Gillborn's research shows that most White people become defensive – that any suggestion of racist attitudes or behaviours in wider systems can be seen as almost a personal attack on themselves.

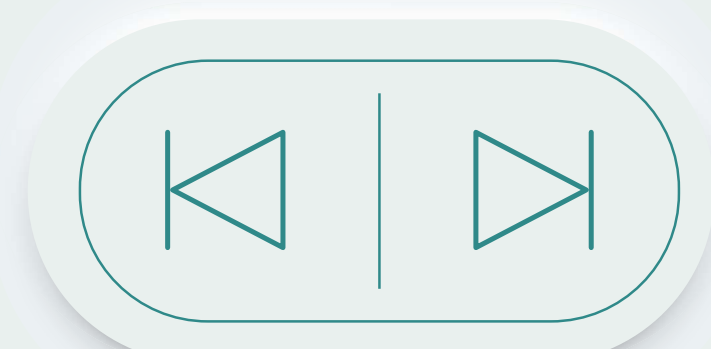
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Professor Gillborn spoke about political systems within our country and internationally that give rise to an acceptance of racism. This is largely because the systems are designed and made up of elite White people, who often influence and shape policy, using the “White working-class argument” to try and silence critical discussion about race and racism.

What really made an impact on us from Professor Gillborn’s talk was the way that he helped us to look more critically at the statistics and information around White working-class boys’ attainment. Professor Gillborn explored the messaging that has been perpetuated by successive governments – both Labour and Conservative – and has built up unhelpful ideas of “race victims”. Professor Gillborn showed headlines from politically right-leaning newspapers, which painted the White working class as work-shy, lazy, looking for handouts and benefits, or not supportive of their children’s education. He explored narratives around blaming schools and systems for focusing on “the Black kids” or “the immigrants”, at the detriment of “the White children”. This takes the heat off the government and the way in which they are dealing with poverty and disadvantage, he suggested, for the narrative to be centred and focused in this way.

We, as well-meaning educationalists, are maybe being trained by misinformation and misrepresentation to look at the issues from a perspective that best suits successive governments – a perspective that therefore perpetuates racist views.

Questions about who has access to power and who gets to choose what counts as reality are inherent in the provocations that Professor Gillborn posed in his talk. There was a sense in which his words left us with a feeling of powerlessness, but we concluded afterwards that knowledge is power. Now, being more aware of the deeper dynamics at play, we have been afforded greater insight into how we can better question and interrogate messages that are being put out in the wider community. We can also better plan for and manage talking about race and racism in our schools and with our wider stakeholders.

We arranged an INSET session that looked primarily at disadvantage and poverty, and at the barriers faced by children in our school. We gently sowed seeds in this INSET about what policy makers might do to prevent us from looking at individual barriers faced by children and families. We shared videos of speakers who had recently spoken at the HFL Education National Disadvantaged Conference, with a particular focus on Jean Gross CBE and Dr Katriona O’Sullivan. This helped us to explore themes of *belonging* and how we as teachers can change lives, by sometimes working outside of systemic thinking and being flexible in the way we look at individual barriers. Although Katriona had not particularly explored the low expectations of her as being linked to her race – being of Irish heritage – her talk provoked exploration of that theme with our staff.

We also had the privilege in January of visiting Mount Grace School in Potters Bar, where Geeta Patel is headteacher. As primary practitioners, it was hugely beneficial for us to see and speak with secondary school pupils and to garner some of their feelings and reactions to the work we were doing and the impact it is having on them.

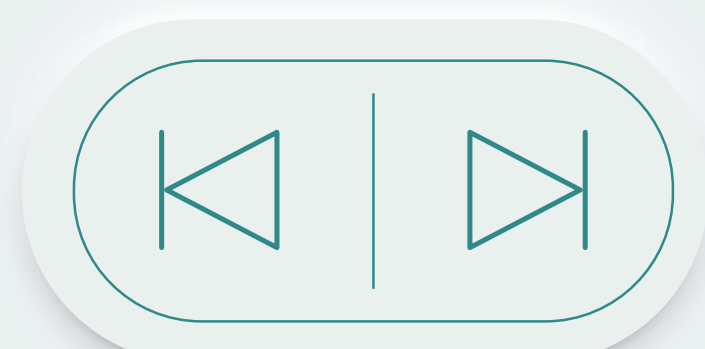
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Geeta Patel then led a session at our last seminar, which was rooted in personal experience and gave us a strong message around belonging. She cited the importance that a feeling of belonging offered to her and her children as an African–Asian family in the UK. It was an upbeat and affirming talk that breathed hope and aspiration into anyone listening. Again, we cited Geeta’s experiences and reflections in our work with staff back at school, sharing her slides and the self-efficacy she conveyed, which took her to Cambridge and to success in her life.

### March 2024

Seminar 5 led us to think deeply about a group in society that suffers a disproportionate amount of racism in modern Britain: Jewish people. The first talk – by Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga from UCL’s Centre of Holocaust Education, on “Addressing Antisemitism” – was informative about what is exceptional about antisemitism. She spoke from the heart about the events of 7 October and the abduction, rape and murder of hundreds of Israeli citizens. She spoke about the history of antisemitism and the stereotypes and tropes that Jewish people face.

We reflected on the impact the Gaza conflict is having on those from the Jewish community within our school settings, many of whom do not support the actions of the Israeli government but feel the anger over the ongoing suffering of innocent civilians in Palestine directed at them. Ruth-Anne Lenga expressed her sadness that events “on the other side of the world” are being visited on Jewish people here. However, she herself had begun her talk by referencing her understandable personal pain at what had happened so far away on 7 October. We need to get messaging right for our own Jewish and Islamic children, staff and families at this time.

Penny Rabiger – from the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality at Leeds Beckett University – delivered a session on “Creating the Anti-racist School: What Does the Evidence Tell Us?” She spoke of the work and research she has carried out, with a variety of staff across a range of education settings, and broke her findings into manageable areas for school leaders to explore:

- governance and leadership
- the school environment
- professional learning and development
- the hidden curriculum
- pedagogy and curriculum
- parents, carers and community

Penny gave practical suggestions for how we can unpick and explore each of these areas. We reflected that we have carried out lots of work on our pedagogy and curriculum and the school environment, but also whether our school and curriculum only whisper *You belong*.

We are not sure that we are shouting *You belong* loudly enough yet. Later that evening, Penny reflected on social media about the day’s antisemitism training. She shared her view that antisemitism training needs to speak about genocides and

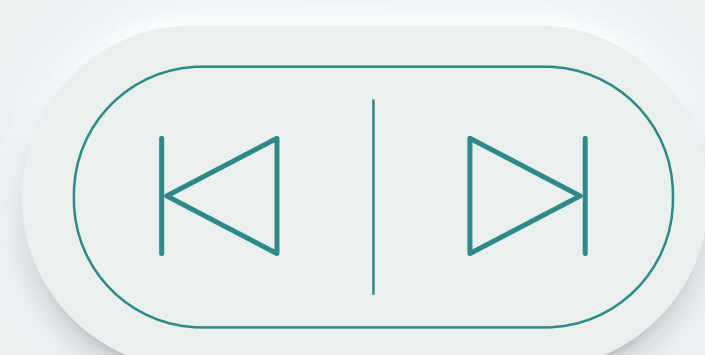
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holocausts plural: “We all need to understand how racism works in its many forms and to understand the difference between interpersonal racism and its structural and institutional forms. There is no hierarchy here. When people are dehumanised, we all become dehumanised.”

These final words echoed those of Sufian Sadiq in a previous Great Representation face-to-face session. The enormity, pain and rawness of what is happening in the world has repercussions that will be with us for some time to come. We need to feel able to respectfully challenge both antisemitism and Islamophobia in our settings.

Following this Great Representation seminar, we had the privilege of a tour, a pupil voice session, and a meeting with a governor at Harpenden Academy – the final school visit of our hub group. The school has worked hard on engaging parents in their work on being an anti-racist school, and it was clear that the project has permeated every aspect of their school.

As we approach the end of the Great Representation programme, we have reflected as a leadership team on all we have achieved thus far. The successes we are particularly proud of are as follows:

1. We have had a breadth of researchers, readers and leaders in the field of anti-racism in schools to lead our thoughts and reflections. We have been able to share some of this with our staff back at school in more focused CPD than would otherwise have been the case.
2. Our school curriculum has been redesigned with a focus on representation and belonging. Our children, governors and parents have played a part in this redesign, but the work remains ongoing. The feeling of a dynamic curriculum, which is rooted in social urgency and is able to flexibly respond to the current needs of our children and community, is now taking form.
3. Our anti-racism policy, procedures and approaches have been drawn up anew. They will be better lived and used as a resource to support our ongoing growth in understanding racism, challenging racism, and growing from an ability to reflect and learn from racist incidents within our school.
4. We have been able to make links with other practitioners in schools that share our commitment, and we have been able to learn and reflect with them as we have journeyed this far.
5. We go into the future with a spirit of optimism about what we can change. Speakers have been booked to continue our work in this area in the summer term. There is a desire within our staff to continue to build on the work of the last two terms, particularly with a focus on belonging, as something we can increasingly focus on in our environments, curriculum, communication and culture.

*Shelley Bleau and Mary Ann Cooper*

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# CHATER JUNIOR SCHOOL

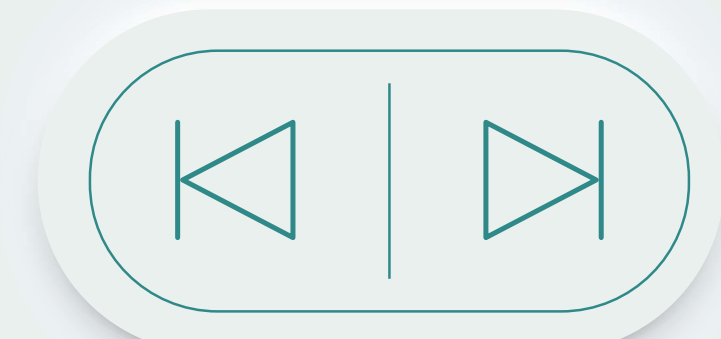
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## September 2023

Chater Junior School is a two-form-entry junior school situated within a highly populated residential area of West Watford. 98% of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds – 48% are Pakistani, with 20% identifying as being from an Other Asian background. Just 2% of families identify as White British. The vast majority of pupils speak English as an additional language, and over 49 different languages are spoken at home.

Over the last two years, the school has faced some challenges related to differences between cultural and religious beliefs and the curriculum. Some examples include:

- parental desire to withdraw pupils from the sex education lessons of the RSHE curriculum
- parental concerns about teaching tolerance and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community
- teaching of texts featuring same sex relationships such as *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson

During the 2022 Qatar World Cup, the headteacher faced a backlash from the parent community when he informed them that staff would be showing the football World Cup to pupils, and also providing an education about Qatar's breaking of human rights laws during the build-up to the worldwide event.

This included educating pupils about Qatar's stance on the LGBTQ+ community. A few members of the parent community wrote letters of concern and regret, alleging that to educate their children on such matters is demonstrating Islamophobia. With guidance from the governing body, leaders cowrote a letter in response to these allegations. Along with the governors, the headteacher outlined the ways in which Chater Junior School designs a truly inclusive curriculum that helps pupils consider a variety of world views.

Following this incident, leaders began to build towards finding ways to open and heal the relationship with the parent community. We held an Eid event in which we welcomed every member of the community to bring their own traditional food and wear cultural attire in celebration of our inclusive and diverse community. Through the Eid festival, collectively we shared and celebrated the richness of our cultural diversity. Roxy created her own cultural heritage tree as an example for pupils to draw on. This was so they could find out more about their own heritage by including members of their families or researching the countries that their parents or grandparents had come from.

Our curriculum includes a diverse range of texts that are linked across core and foundation subjects. Supportive texts include characters that provide diversity of ethnicity, neurodiversity, sexuality or gender. Staff weave *curriculum threads* throughout the curriculum. These threads are:

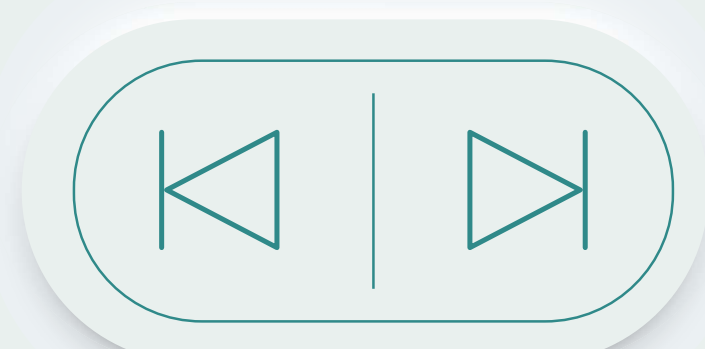
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- leadership
- adversity and diversity
- change
- pride
- equality and equity
- empathy

Each of these threads is revisited year on year, and they are built on through different approaches within the curriculum content, thus developing mastery of each.

We have made conscious steps towards becoming an anti-racist school. We invited HFL Education race equity advisers Shammi Rahman and Toks Olusamokun to open conversations with our staff about a shared and universally understood language around race. Their expertise helped our staff to develop systems for identifying covert and overt racism and for reporting of incidents. We are continuing our work with them in building staff confidence in having “uncomfortable” and “courageous” conversations about race with pupils.

We signed up for the Great Representation programme because, although we have a rich diversity of cultures, we have seen that racist beliefs exist within our community around other religions and cultures, and even within the same religious or cultural group. Our main agenda is to begin to build understanding and expertise as a leadership team that can be passed on to teachers to equip all staff to manage and address racism head-on. Where our curriculum cannot break down barriers or deconstruct pre-existing beliefs, we wish to develop a therapeutic approach in deconstructing and confronting damaging beliefs.

### October 2023

We left the first Great Representation seminar feeling inspired, empowered and hungry to implement change. We were thinking bigger and questioning how we can have a wider reach, not only within Chater but also within the community. We met with and learnt about the other schools within our hub group. Although the settings differ greatly, it became immediately clear that some of the challenges we face as a school are by no means out of the ordinary.

One key takeaway from Professor Paul Miller’s lecture was about being proactive in acknowledging our own privileges when trying to fight against other injustices. For Roxy, as a mixed-heritage female, although she may sometimes face inequality due to her gender and race, she is privileged as an able-bodied, heterosexual person. Understanding her own privilege enabled her to see a way in which she can use the privileges she does have to make a difference for other people.

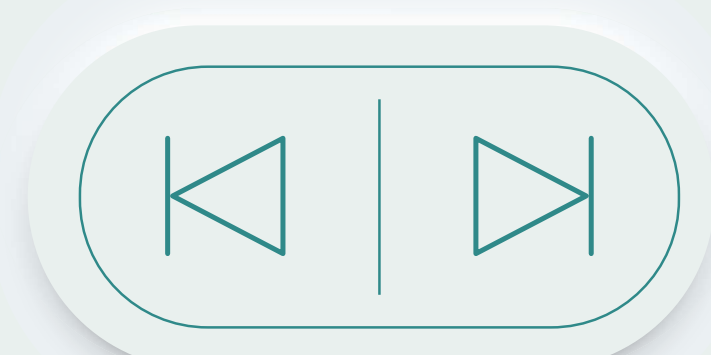
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Cynthia Rowe educated our cohort with her presentation about the continued racism she faces as a Black, female headteacher. The lightbulb moment for us was that our work is only just beginning. As teachers, we often attempt to address serious and sensitive cultural or racial matters through reflective discussions around historical abuse of a people group; or through a fictional text, where a person of colour overcomes adversity. Cynthia's account of her own experiences opened our eyes to reflect on the true reality of the attitudes and beliefs that exist within our Hertfordshire community.

We felt challenged about how we can truly address the heart of harmful beliefs and attitudes. This is something that we continue to ask questions about in order to create a solution, through development of a therapeutic approach to dealing with race incidents.

Dr Michael Catchpool spoke about his experience, when searching for jobs, of getting a sense of whether he could *belong*. He spoke about scrolling through websites to view the diversity of the staff. We reflected on our own recruitment processes, and to what extent non-White individuals would feel comfortable applying for a role within our setting. We approached this question with our governing board. Some recognised the need for all children to see a representation of themselves in the staffing body; others struggled to see how a small school in Watford could tackle such a large, systemic issue. Some governors didn't necessarily feel that not being representative was a problem the school needed to overcome. Most importantly, this has begun a conversation about race with the governing board, which we will continue to pick up throughout the year.

Since the seminar, we have created a racial equity action plan, outlining our next steps. Actions include:

- creating an anti-racism policy
- improving the staff's ability to confront racial discrimination
- refining the approach to recruitment
- including racial equality as part of performance management for staff
- further developing racial equality work with parents

This plan has been agreed by the governing board and shared with the senior leadership, and it will inform the CPD that staff receive for the remainder of the year.

We welcomed our hub group of school leaders to Chater, where we showcased the work that we started last year. The hub schools came to observe teaching and view school displays, and they spoke with teachers and pupils about representation and how well embedded curriculum threads are.

The visit highlighted that most pupils were able to speak confidently about the curriculum and the wider representation across different subjects. Pupils struggled, however, to apply these concepts to real-life examples within school or home life. This has outlined a key next step for us to address: to encourage pupils to make explicit links about what the curriculum threads mean for them within their own personal lives, and for us to highlight high-profile examples of these from life in the UK.

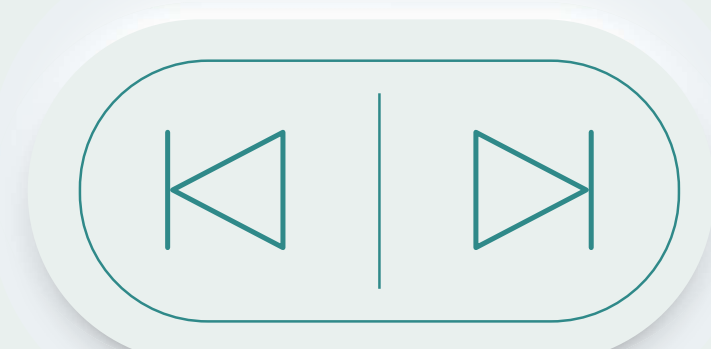
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## November 2023

“Silence has not protected me or kept me safe.” These words left an indelible mark on us following the October seminar. Two speakers, Sufian Sadiq and Shammi Rahman, shared their experiences of growing up and living in England as Muslims. They had very different stories and journeys, but one theme flowed through: frustration and pain. Frustration and pain rooted in their continued experience of racism in the year 2023.

It was difficult for us to return to school knowing the possibility that such experiences could be faced by our pupils. Sufian raised questions about whether there was any point in educating pupils about “being anything that you want to be”. This is the very message that our teachers promote on a daily basis, through texts such as *Mae Among the Stars* by Roda Ahmed, the story of Mae Jemison overcoming racism and adversity to eventually fly to space as the first Black female astronaut. Are we selling an unachievable dream?

Since our last seminar, there has been a racist incident in one class in our school. The incident was similar to ones that had occurred previously, involving pupils’ racism towards the Black community. This time we wanted to respond differently.

In this incident Pupil A, of Senegalese heritage, reported that Pupil B had referred to her as a “monkey” and said he had been given an “n-word’ pass”, thus being permitted to use the term “n\*\*\*\*r”. After investigating fully, we found that Pupil B had approached a child with Sri Lankan heritage (Pupil C) and asked him for a “pass”, allowing him to use this word. Pupil C gave permission to his friend, not knowing the meaning of “the n-word”. Pupil C said that he had heard other pupils in class talking about “the n-word” but never using the full word.

Our past response to such an incident would have been to address the incident on an individual basis, meeting with the parents of the victim and perpetrator, in line with our behaviour policy. As a response to this event, the Year 5 teacher and Roxy put together a standalone RSHE lesson to educate and address all pupils on the racist terminology used. The class looked at definitions of racism and asked pupils to share their understanding and experiences of racism. Some interesting conversations developed, including around pupils’ perceptions and racist assumptions. For instance, a pupil described feeling unhappy when fellow Muslim pupils ask her whether she is Hindu, based on the way that she looks. She said that this assumption makes her feel like an outsider to her own religion.

The challenging and uncomfortable part of the lesson was responding to the racist language used earlier in the week. As a team we discussed whether we should be explicit and show or say racist words that had been used. We decided to be explicit so that there was no uncertainty about what each term meant, how it sounded, and its historical context. We felt that this helped pupils appreciate the severity of the language and to understand why it was hurtful to use it.

This one standalone lesson is a step towards tailoring our response to meet the precise needs of classes and individuals in response to racism and, more importantly, to create a pre-emptive, education-focused approach. We empowered this class to

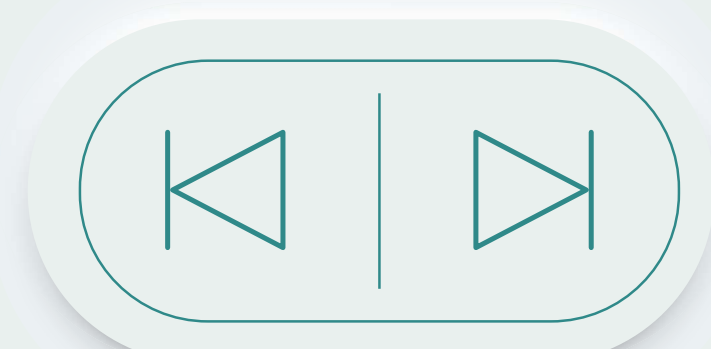
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become anti-racist allies and listen out for and immediately report any other such use of language.

We want to build on this initial lesson to create a series or unit of work that can be used more widely to educate children in our school on race and on how to identify racist language and behaviour, thereby creating a positive change. We will be developing this approach over the next few months. Perhaps creating racially literate children means that when our children grow up, there are no unachievable dreams for any person, regardless of race, ethnicity or religion?

## December 2023

As educational practitioners, one of the most challenging aspects of our roles is to manage the balance of being fair, direct and sensitive in the face of racist incidents. On the one hand, we need to be clear and firm that under no circumstances can we *other* members of our community based on their race. Conversely, a school is a place that aims to nurture and educate pupils on how to behave in the world, with the message that we can and should make mistakes. How do you take a no-tolerance approach to racism in a school as well as balancing the need to educate on the impact of the incident and on why racism is so harmful? Can there be punitive measures in place whilst also taking a therapeutic approach?

We taught our second lesson in response to a racist incident in Year 6 this month. Our most recent lesson followed a racist incident in a Year 6 class, where the term “monkey” was used to describe a Black pupil during a football game. This pupil had also been greeted by a mixed-race pupil, who said “my n\*\*\*\*r” whilst giving a handshake. We decided to build on the first lesson, focusing on a definition of *race* as a human construct, followed by a discussion of pupils’ own experiences of racism and racist language that they may have heard on the playground.

The whole-class discussion allowed us to share an in-depth historical context of certain vocabulary, including why certain words were created in order to *other* certain groups. We followed guidance from Dr Pragya Agarwal’s book *Wish We Knew What to Say* when addressing the use of the “n-word”, and her advice on promoting allyship. We added reflection questions at the end of the lesson: “How has your view of racism changed over the course of this lesson?” and “What action are you going to take, starting now?”

Some interesting moments within this lesson included one Year 6 girl of Pakistani heritage sharing that she had experienced someone calling her a “dumb Brown girl”. When we asked the class which word was offensive in this sentence, 90% of the class replied “Brown”. We then discussed the difference between fact and context. We provided examples of our own skin tones, where Roxy pointed out the class teacher was White and she herself was Brown, albeit a pale Brown at this time of year!

We then posed the question of whether it was offensive to name skin colour. We provided the context that, if used as an insult, it is irrelevant that the person being named as “dumb” has White, Black or Brown skin. It therefore becomes a defining feature in the sentence, making skin colour a central part of how this person is “dumb”, within a negative context.

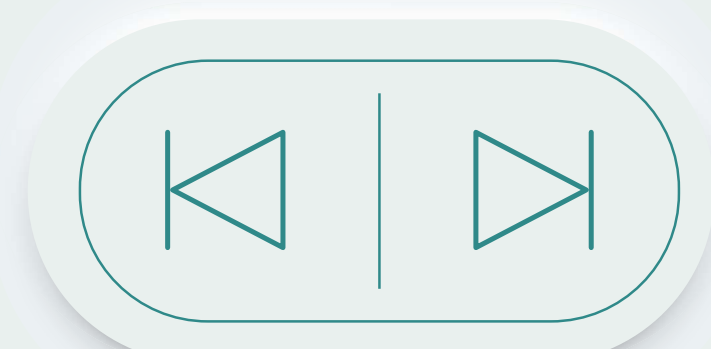
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Throughout the lesson, staff were conscious to monitor the reaction of the victim of the racist incident that had prompted the lesson. This was particularly marked when the questions “Have you experienced or witnessed racism?” and “What happened?” were asked. As the conversation began, he removed himself from the classroom temporarily. On his return, it was noticeable that he had his back turned to his peers and appeared to look uncomfortable, even with adult support. It occurred to us that, although we are educating the majority about racism and promoting empathy through questioning, we may not be getting the balance right when it comes to ensuring the wellbeing of pupils who do experience racism. We were left wondering what more we can do to prepare pupils for these lessons.

## January 2024

The new year brought a new headteacher for us at Chater Junior School. We were excited to welcome back Raj Khindey, who previously worked at Chater for 17 years as class teacher, assistant headteacher and deputy headteacher, before moving to another local primary school as deputy. Raj describes our school community as part of her tapestry. Her passion for the work in the Great Representation programme comes from her own lived experiences, born to immigrant parents and spending her formative years in a predominantly White area in Thetford, Norfolk.

Raj experienced racism throughout her childhood and into her early adult life. From fireworks being launched into her parents’ news agency, to having a brick thrown at her on her way to school. Raj experienced extreme, overt racism until her parents told her one day that she and her brother needed to leave for their wellbeing. After her GCSEs, Raj moved away to Bedford and was apart from her family for 18 months. This was to build a life and further her education somewhere safe, due to Bedford being a multicultural community.

Raj recalls having a supportive history teacher at secondary school, who tried to speak to Raj about her experiences of racism. However, Raj had internalised the racism. At this stage in her life, she did not feel comfortable in her own skin and felt that she wanted to be White.

Raj has been inspired by the Great Representation speakers. As a leader, she realises that racism is something we need to talk about openly to create change. When Raj first joined the Chater community almost 20 years ago, she instantly felt that she belonged at a school for the first time. The community were welcoming, and Raj felt that she could see her own parents represented in the parent community at Chater. Our school motto – *Making lives better* – resonated with Raj on a personal level, as her family had moved to the United Kingdom for a better life.

One of the objectives on our 2023–2024 race equity plan is to increase diversity in class teachers. Raj feels passionately about this objective and commits to making this a school priority, based on her own experience as the only Asian teacher on the staff for most of her career.

Within our new leadership team, we have aligned and reviewed our priorities, using our race equity plan. Achieving the best outcomes for our pupils is at the heart of

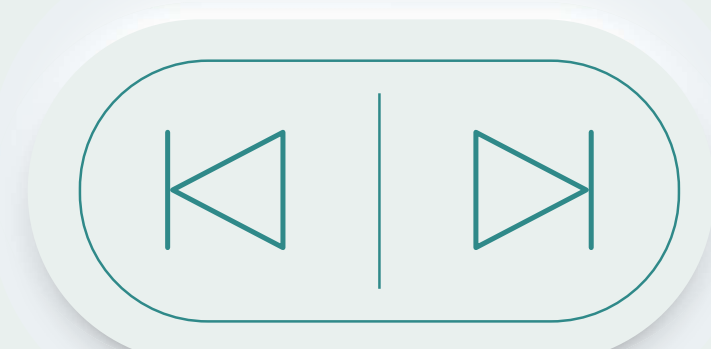
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everything we do. This includes preparing our tight-knit community of pupils, 98% of which are from a minority ethnic background, for the world outside of Watford. We want our pupils to understand how to live in harmony and practice the values that we set out for them beyond primary school. We also want to ensure that pupils understand that, in reality, the United Kingdom does not mirror the school's ethnic profile; the 2021 census showed that only 18% of the population was from an ethnic minority group.

Our hub group is made up of schools from Harpenden, Borehamwood and Bishop's Stortford, which more closely reflect the national picture in terms of ethnicity. During our last seminar we reflected that, despite this, our schools face similar challenges. While their schools must aim to prepare pupils to accept, not discriminate; and promote kindness when facing diversity; our school must consider preparing pupils for adversity and potential discrimination. We concluded that exposure to diversity is essential, in both contexts. Where our pupils don't experience a White majority, as reflected in the outside world, their pupils have not been exposed to difference in real-life context.

This left an important question for our hub group: what can we be actively doing to expose our pupils to "the real world", whether they are in ethnically diverse schools or not? How can leaders use their own experiences of adversity and diversity to drive long-lasting change in our schools?

## February 2024

We have been reflecting on why we joined the Great Representation programme in the first place. Firstly, we recognised that our parent and pupil community held beliefs that demonstrated intolerance towards other races, religions and sexual orientations. Therefore, we wanted to build understanding and expertise as a leadership team and pass this on to staff, to equip everyone to deal with discriminative incidents. We also wanted to continue to refine a therapeutic approach, to:

- get to the heart of hateful beliefs and attitudes
- unpack words conveying intolerance
- educate pupils about the history, context and semantics of their language

We have put considerable work into diversifying and decolonising our curriculum through the use of curriculum threads and diverse texts, from a variety of authors and with protagonists with varying protected characteristics. We discovered that pupils struggled to apply the EDI curriculum that we are building to their own life. To address this, we used the text *Race Cars* by Jenny Devenny to address pupils' understanding about White privilege and how to stand up against any form of discrimination.

We realise that our previous approach when addressing incidents of discrimination was reactive, often involving standalone lessons. Although these were effective as a reaction, (there have since been no further reported incidents of racism), this was

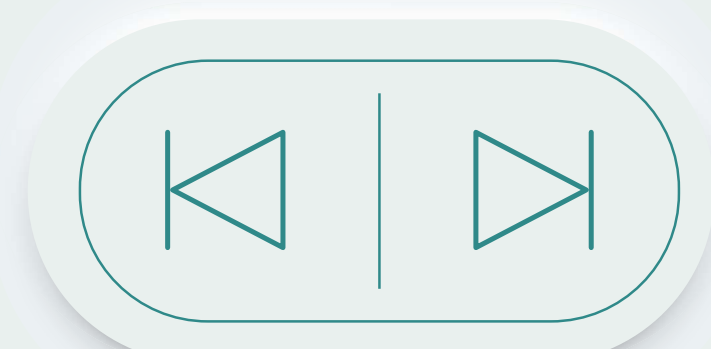
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not sufficient. Together with the English lead, Roxy created a series of lessons for English and guided reading to support the class teachers in focusing on language. Pupils are building their racial literacy, developing the vocabulary to discuss each of the protected characteristics, understanding what White privilege means, and recognising what it means to be an upstander or a bystander. This work will continue to be revisited weekly by class teachers through in-class assemblies.

Our therapeutic approach remains in the early stages. Currently, we have refined our behaviour policy to include a script for a therapeutic conversation between teacher and child. However, this script is generic, and it will be tailored further to racist incidents.

School leaders have previously used fictional texts to aid pupils that have used discriminative language to develop empathy and unpack where beliefs and views may be born. For instance, *Pansy Boy* by Paul Harfleet was used to aid helpful conversations with a child that had used racist terminology. We discussed discrimination in a different context (themes of homophobia). The pupil was able to identify where the *bully* character's views stemmed from. The child reflected on his own experience of using hurtful language, expressing where and why he had used it, and he empathised with the *victim* character to express regret about making another child feel that way. Our continued work includes selecting a range of go-to texts and creating a script that can support leaders in delivering this approach consistently.

Although our time on the Great Representation programme is ending, we recognise how early in our journey we are in becoming a truly inclusive setting. Our aim is that every member of our community feels that they belong. The next steps for us are outlined below:

- **Hold weekly in-class assemblies.** Following the *Race Cars* unit, we felt that we did not want pupils to lose momentum with their learning and exposure to the protected characteristics and learning about EDI. Roxy has prepared weekly discussion questions and activities for class teachers to lead with their teaching assistants. An example of a debate included is: *Is it possible to be "blind" to others' skin colour? Justify*, and *Is there a more important protected characteristic? Why?*
- **Educate our parent community.** We have already increased the frequency and number of community events. During these celebration events we will use the opportunity to showcase the learning that pupils do in in-class assemblies and PSHE.
- **Ensure that EDI is not just seen as the responsibility of an EDI lead, but as everyone's role.** In order for us to create a truly inclusive and equitable ethos and culture, the responsibility of EDI needs to shift from the EDI lead to every single member of staff. To achieve this at teacher level, EDI performance appraisal targets are going to be set from 2024/25. The in-class assemblies will include class teachers and teaching assistants. Rather than the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, subject leaders will take ownership of diversifying their subject areas.
- **Continue to decolonise and diversify our curriculum with help from experts.** The Great Representation seminars have helped leaders to understand that if we are White and were brought up in England, we are limited by our own White British

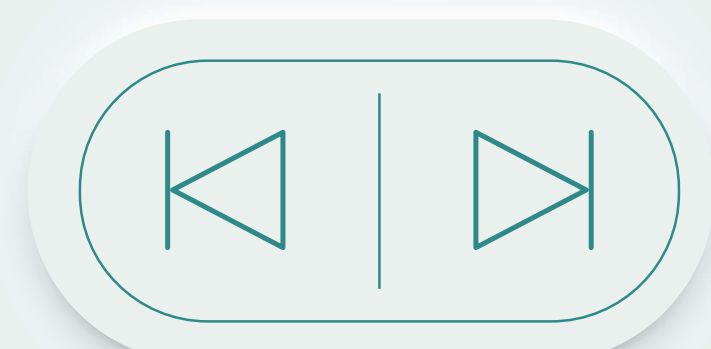
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curriculum experiences. Unless we intentionally seek diverse texts outside of our own education in our subject areas, we cannot successfully decolonise and diversify because we need to become experts and understand different perspectives. We recognise that this is difficult to achieve while we lack diversity in our staff team. Therefore, reaching out to experts and members of our community that have greater knowledge is essential to review our curriculum together.

- **Maintain partnerships with our hub group, external visitors and the EDI network.** One of the most enriching aspects of the programme has been the collaboration with our hub group, visiting their schools and sharing experiences and viewpoints. Our aim is to drive long-lasting change across our schools. Another network that the assistant headteacher has been attending is the Hertfordshire EDI network, with Shammi Rahman and Toks Olusamokun. The training and wisdom from these partnerships will help the assistant headteacher to design training for all staff, which will be delivered each term to keep EDI work at the forefront of Chater's agenda.

*Roxy Batliwala, Raj Khindey and Laurie O'Brien*

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# CRABTREE INFANTS' AND JUNIOR SCHOOL

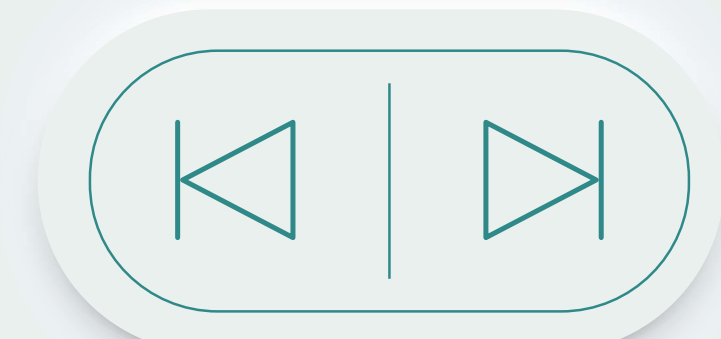
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## September 2023

At Crabtree everyone in the school community is passionate about making sure they do everything they can to provide the children with the best possible future. We embed our core values – kindness, courage, integrity, gratitude and compassion – and we empower our children to become empathetic and respectful global citizens of the future.

The Great Representation programme has initiated a renewed drive at Crabtree Infants' and Junior School to ensure that all pupils, staff and wider members of our community feel seen and welcomed. We work to develop children's awareness and understanding of equality and diversity. However, we have started asking ourselves what more could we be doing in a largely affluent, White area. (We are located in Harpenden, which has a population of 30,000 people, 27,000 of which are Caucasian, with the majority born in the UK.)

Our school community includes a total of 28 different languages spoken at home. We want to continue to review and develop our SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) curriculum and ensure that the wider community is represented in the decisions we make relating to our curriculum. We wish to embed diversity even more in our curriculum and to guard against tokenism.

As we embark on this programme, we recognise that it is important to understand our key challenges in ensuring diversity and inclusivity throughout our school community. Engaging in conversations with our staff colleagues will enable us to identify challenges we may not have known were present. It is important that our colleagues feel they can talk openly about their cultures and beliefs, with support and understanding from their peers. We aim for all staff to feel valued and to embrace each other's cultures and identities.

This month we have appointed our first Diversity Council, across both the infant and junior schools. All 14 children appointed were able to define diversity and showed engagement and enthusiasm for the role, which was fantastic to see. The council has discussed our school libraries and how children might feel about being represented in the books they read. We also discussed changing our house names from colours to names of influential people from different backgrounds who have made a mark on history.

The Great Representation programme will, we hope, support us in continuing to embed equality in our schools. We want to ensure that we are representing all children's needs and experiences and strengthening our environment for all members of the Crabtree community through open and honest conversations, workshops and opportunities. We have updated our school improvement plan accordingly.

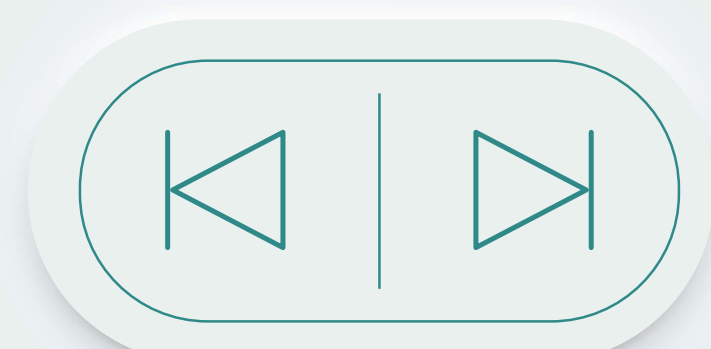
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## October 2023

The first Great Representation seminar was incredibly insightful and eye-opening. It was fascinating to hear from some wonderful speakers about how racism is sadly still embedded in our society. Professor Paul Miller highlighted structural racism. A key moment was the discussion of privileges in society and the concept of using these privileges to combat racism. The whole day was full of powerful and raw conversations, with the speakers and within our hub group; the atmosphere was positive and inspiring.

Professor Miller highlighted the underrepresentation of ethnic minority staff in education – an example being that out of 24,281 headteachers, only 397 are from an ethnic minority background. It was interesting to see the statistics of students' performances academically across the nation, with both Black Caribbean and Gypsy Roma children typically performing below the trend line for the national average at all key stages. Historically, the UK government has recognised the teaching qualification of teachers from most majority White countries but not the qualification of those from many majority Black countries, resulting in many overseas qualified teachers of colour having to get requalified to teach in the UK. This truly highlighted the inequity that many people still face in a system of structural racism.

The session ended with a very powerful speech from Cynthia Rowe, a local Black headteacher, who has experienced racism throughout her life and during her time in education. Her talk made us really think about how present racism still is and the impact it can have.

Towards the end of October, we had the pleasure of visiting Chater Junior School in Watford with our hub colleagues. Although geographically located nearby, the contrast of location gave us valuable insight into a very different school community. It was a delight to speak to the children about the school values, which are clearly well embedded, and to discover what diversity means to them. We also had the opportunity to have open discussions with other staff, both from the school and those who are part of our hub group, and we were moved by some powerful experiences that they shared.

In order to grow and learn on our Great Representation journey, we greatly value the insights we gain from both visiting other schools and the discussions we can have with staff and visiting speakers.

Before we start to embed any changes, we need to understand how both pupils and staff at Crabtree view diversity and whether they feel confident in discussing it. In order to do this, we carried out some school surveys. Children (Year R to Year 6) were asked a range of questions. We were pleased to see that all children felt that they were a valued member of our community, and that they felt our school encourages respect towards people from all different backgrounds.

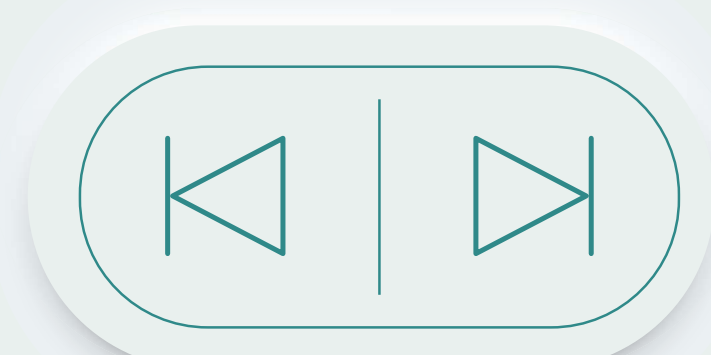
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The children were able to give examples of how they were learning about racism or discrimination, including through assemblies, anti-bullying workshops and guided reading sessions. Not all children, however, were confident in explaining diversity, and only a few had a preunderstanding of the word *prejudice*. It was also noted that not all children feel confident in sharing their backgrounds and culture with their class peers. This is something we can now look at addressing as part of our next steps.

The staff were also surveyed. Their feedback concurred in terms of identifying a need to better support children and adults from different backgrounds to share information about their culture. The majority of staff said they felt it was necessary to have diversity and inclusion training in order for them to become more confident in discussions with both peers and pupils. These results were as we had expected; we are aware that this is an area we need to focus on. Our staff team has become significantly more diverse, and we would like to celebrate this diversity and ensure that everyone feels seen and heard. We are excited about the opportunities that this can bring for the staff, the pupils and the local community.

### November 2023

At the beginning of the month, we celebrated Diversity Day in both our infant and junior schools. This was a brilliant opportunity for children and staff to learn about others in our school community and about what makes each of us special. It was interesting to gain a better insight into the children's identities, and we were surprised to find how diverse the backgrounds of our pupils are. Although pupil records show children's ethnicities and backgrounds, the children were able to share even more details of their family connections around the world.

We have also followed through with a reform of our house names, and these will change annually, for the children to learn about more and more inspirational people from all different backgrounds. For this academic year, the Diversity Council chose the names Attenborough, Rashford, Simmonds and Malala.

The November Great Representation seminar was incredibly moving and eye-opening. On this journey we continue to learn and be empowered by guest speakers. In particular, Sufian Sadiq gave an exceptional talk, which left everyone in the room inspired to make a change but heavy-hearted at the realisation of how many people still hold deep-seated biases against those from ethnic minorities. He dived into the media impact and assumptions of racism, and gave a very raw and honest insight into his own personal experiences of dealing with racism. We felt it was very important to hear firsthand these experiences and how affected Sufian has been by incidents of racism, whether premeditated or as a result of unconscious bias.

One thought-provoking discussion we had, in a session led by Claire Stewart-Hall, was around the topic of privileged identities and how the fight against racism is everyone's fight. The six identities she outlined – Christian hegemony, White body supremacy, patriarchy, neuro-typicality, heteronormativity and capitalism – pave the way for a life encountering less discrimination. Being able to use these privileges to our advantage against racism is what is important. We discussed widening the zone of stress tolerance by becoming comfortable in talking about racism and what can and can't be said. Working with our hub schools, we continued to have rich and open discussions.

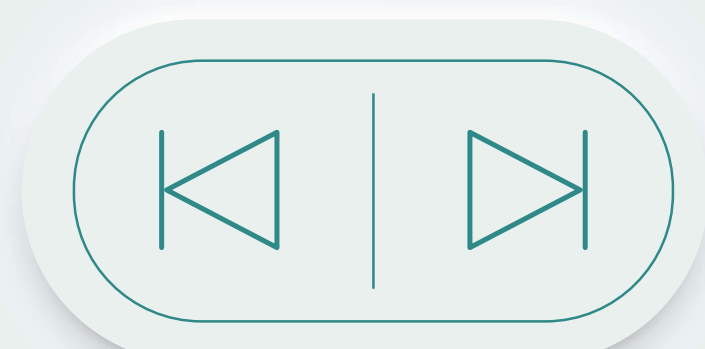
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We were welcomed to Woodlands Primary School in Borehamwood as the next of our hub visits. It was a wonderful visit and a joy to chat to the children at the school about their aspirations and sense of belonging at the school. It was heart-warming to hear all the children give positive responses. They demonstrated a real sense of community spirit, which was noticeable as soon as we entered the school. As a hub group, we discussed the fact that the children did not discuss skin colour when talking about their identities, instead referencing role models.

Moving forward, at Crabtree, we would like to ensure all children can see themselves represented in society with role models who they can relate to, and that all children in our community are represented in the face of adversity.

### December 2023

As we continue our diversity journey at Crabtree, this month's seminar was another insightful view on racism from those who have lived experiences. Bennie Kara gave a brilliant talk on performative allyship. It is sad yet true that many people's heritage becomes lost and perhaps something they hide away from and cease to feel proud of, in the quest to fit in.

Bennie emphasised the protective characteristics and how we need to recognise our unconscious biases, which may come across in small interactions and microaggressions. The analogy of a row of houses helped us to better understand the frustration of the rebuttal of *All lives matter* in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. The idea of one house in a row of houses being on fire – in a time of crisis with people's lives being at stake – and needing help made us realise how counterproductive the *All lives matter* response is. Bennie spoke about identifying diversity in our curriculums; and at Crabtree we feel confident that we have made small movements to ensure diversity is being woven into our everyday learning.

A general table discussion took place around the idea of a global race glossary, in response to the question of *What can and can't we say?* It is so important that we all feel confident when having discussions on racism. From open discussion with our hub group, previous staff voice activity and talks with other members of staff during our staff meetings, we know that we need to have a deeper knowledge of the vocabulary we should and shouldn't use around race. We need to grow our racial literacy.

Martin Luther King Day (15 January) provided both the infant and junior schools an opportunity for reflection from all year groups. The diversity leads from Year 6 led the junior assembly and used an impactful task of asking only children with blue eyes to stand up. These children were told they could vote on whether the children sitting down were allowed a break time. They highlighted that it was unfair that only children with blue eyes could vote, and this allowed the students to understand in effect the unfairness around discrimination. This task was also used in the KS1 assembly, led by one of us, and all the children were able to see how it was not fair. Both assemblies offered the opportunity to focus on equality and the legacy of Martin Luther King.

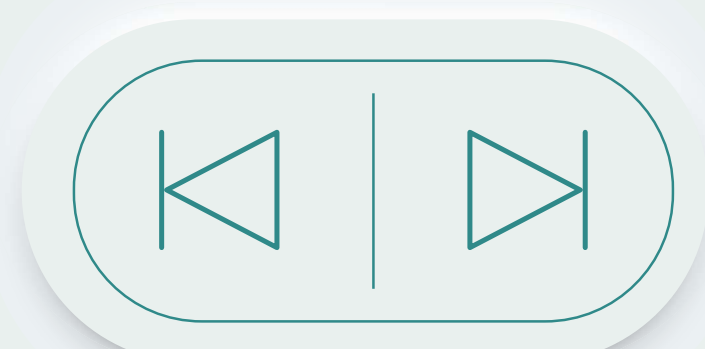
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We most recently enjoyed an insightful online conference, organised by HFL Education, on how as educators we can better serve disadvantaged learners. Author and poet Lemn Sissay delivered a meaningful talk on his time in the care system as a young, Black boy. One takeaway from this was that many children live the self-fulfilling prophecy of being the “naughty” child. Many children in the care system take blame and experience a feeling of guilt for their circumstances.

Lemn highlighted that it is often the disadvantaged children who will be most thankful for their education and for the adults in school settings who support them. It is the children who test the skills of educators who will most appreciate the education they are given – later down the line if not at the time. Childhood experiences become relevant as we reflect on them as adults. It is so important that all children feel a sense of belonging in their school community. This really matters for their learning – especially for underserved learners, who can feel disconnected in other areas of their lives.

Although our pupil voice feedback at Crabtree suggested that there is a strong sense of belonging at the school, we would like to ensure that this is the case for every single one of our community members and be proud to not miss a single child. Inspired by Paul Miller’s mantra from the first session, *You see me, you hear me, I belong*, it is important we make an impact with our values-based culture at Crabtree, where culture and awareness of others are regularly planted, grown and watered day to day in many different ways.

## January 2024

As we move into a new year and reflect on our journey so far, it is clear to us that the way that future generations of children identify with and recognise themselves within their communities is of great importance. As educators we aim to ensure all children feel a strong sense of belonging in the school community, but we need to delve deeper and make certain that each and every child is proud of who and what they are. The fourth seminar really highlighted this.

When we reflect on our upbringings as White, British females, we realise that we must have – at points in our lives – failed to recognise racism. Of course, we have been able to recognise racist acts that have been intentional, but we now appreciate unconscious racism better through hearing a range of lived experiences.

We listened to David Gillborn, emeritus professor of Critical Race Studies at Birmingham University, speak of how teaching children to “not see colour” will only make racism worse. “Avoiding” race – perhaps because we feel uncomfortable – will not help it go away. Instead, we need to think about what we can do to address race inequity. It has become so clear that children value who they are and who they want to be, based on who they see in their everyday lives. It is the adults who stand in front of the children that inspire them.

Crabtree is majority White British. Children from ethnic minority backgrounds do not often see Black or Asian adult role models in school. We ensure our curriculum is diverse and the book corners are over-flowing with representations of all children and backgrounds, but it is important that the children can aspire to be whatever they want. Seeing themselves represented in adults they meet at school can help. As David Gillborn stated, “Schools are becoming more diverse, whilst teachers are getting Whiter.”

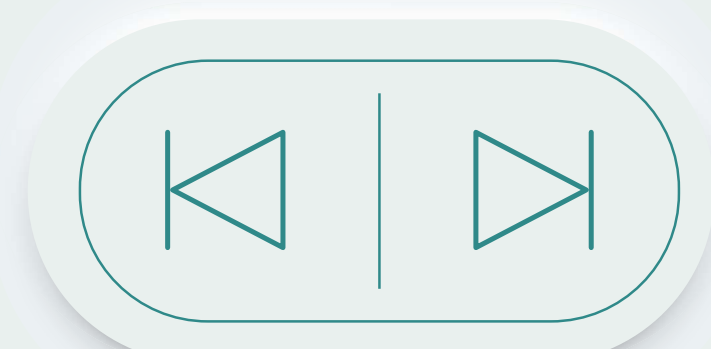
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With research to suggest that teachers expect Black students to be more trouble and that Black pupils are then disciplined more severely and twice as likely to be excluded, David demonstrated that race inequality is persistent. It has been ignored, normalised and accepted. As an adult educator, if you are Black, you are more likely to be disciplined at work or to be put on a temporary contract, and less likely to progress in your working area. It seems the “punishment” based on the colour of your skin is consistent from childhood into adulthood. But we are not powerless to change this, and that is important to remember.

## February 2024

Our February seminar started with Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga, from UCL’s Centre of Holocaust Education, addressing antisemitism. On this incredibly topical issue she gave some extraordinary and sad facts about the harsh realities of being Jewish in current times. With less than 0.5% of the UK population being Jewish, it is abhorrent that there is such deep-rooted racism against Jewish people. Sadly, in particular since 7 October, there are so many Jewish children, who attend school in areas that are not geographically far from us, who are constantly concerned for their safety and wellbeing. Our schools should be a safe space for our children and, as educators, we can set powerful examples that this type of racism is not tolerated.

Penny Rabiger gave another thought-provoking talk on “Creating the Anti-racist School”. By “standing on the shoulders of giants”, she argued, we can learn from and understand those who came before us. She drove home the importance of all staff needing to be aware that racism is an ongoing issue. Only by seeing racism can you be or become anti-racist. Instead of asking *if* a school community is racist, schools need to be looking at and understanding *where* elements of racism are. Racial literacy should be compulsory in all schools.

Our hub member Rebecca Woode, who is headteacher at Woodlands Primary School in Borehamwood, spoke about how it is good to talk, but that it is not always easy. Often, the most uncomfortable conversations are the ones that are firstly necessary, and secondly the most progressive. The only way we can understand racism is by talking about it and avoiding the mindset of *Because we do not see it, it doesn’t exist here*. Rebecca encouraged us all to stop, look, ask and see what is around us. We found this meaningful – an act that is so simple and something we can all do. We often just need to be prepared to face the feeling of being uncomfortable.

## March 2024

Going forward, we are very much looking forward to welcoming Shammi Rahman, HFL Education race equity adviser, to lead some staff training on racism at Crabtree in May. This will be incredibly valuable to our staff team and, by offering the platform for discussion, we hope we can move forward as a staff team to ensure all staff feel more comfortable in talking about racism and recognising it.

Over the last several months, our definition of *success* from this programme has changed. We now think it is not purely about completing this course successfully, but more about our understanding of how we can continue to progress at Crabtree to help us embed an anti-racist culture at the school. Working with our hub peers – collaborating, listening to and learning from one another – has been beyond beneficial.

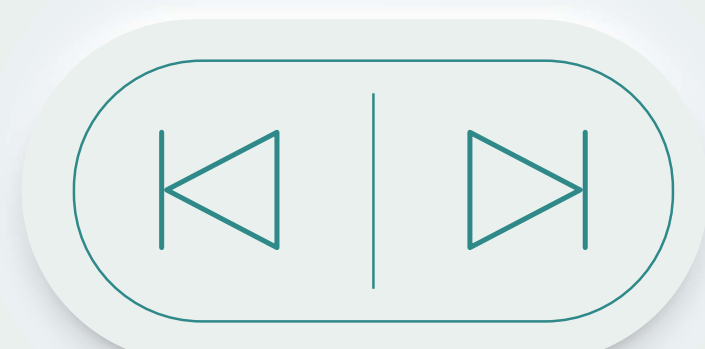
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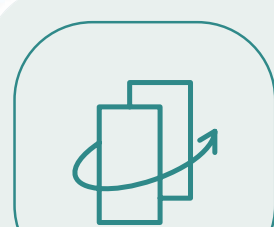
We have been able to hold open discussions, interrogate each other's ways of thinking and come to a deeper understanding, with some valuable insights to take away. We have been inspired not only by key speakers, but by our hub group too – their own school communities and the personal experiences they have shared with us along the journey. Our motto, *Making a difference*, will continue to be embedded at the core of our vision and values for our pupils, but we will also aim to ensure commitment to race equity and making a difference to all in our school community.

*Catherine Nelson and Emma Simmons*

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# HARPENDEN ACADEMY

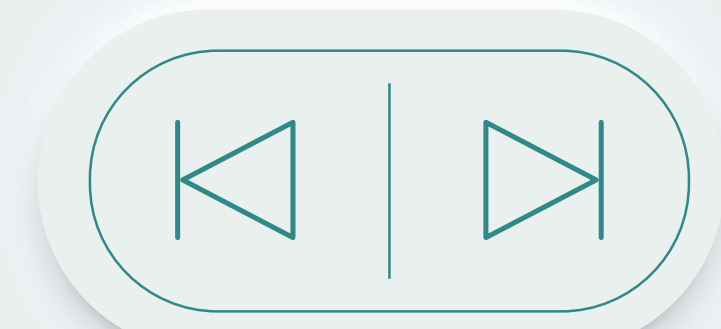
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Harpenden Academy is a one-form-entry school situated in the centre of Harpenden. We are proud to be part of Scholars' Education Trust (SET), which is a growing multi-academy trust of local schools. Since the trust took on the school in 2016, we have been on a journey to build on the initial *free school* status and create a school of global citizens. We operate as a *city school* and have adapted our provision to reflect the needs of the parents and children we serve.

Harpenden Academy's success rests on the three pillars of our school's ethos:

1. We wholly believe in educating the hearts and the minds of our children.
2. We are educators who care, and we nurture our children and their families.
3. We have designed a curriculum for our children to follow, based on the idea that *We hold the ladder for our children to reach the stars.*

Whilst the school has just 213 pupils, the catchment area is large, and many children travel from out of county to attend the school. The school population is becoming more ethnically diverse. Currently, 44% of our students and their families identify as being from minority ethnic and mixed-heritage backgrounds. After White British, the largest group of children come from Any other mixed background (7.9%). We also have a growing Asian community (Chinese, 5%, Indian 5%, and Any other Asian background 4%). We now have 20 different languages spoken within the school.

The staff team is majority White British, with three members of staff (including teaching and support staff) belonging to ethnic minority groups. The governing body is becoming more intentionally diverse; the chair of governors is from a mixed Asian background, and the safeguarding governor is Black American. As we continue to grow our governing body, we will actively approach parents and members of our community that reflect the ethnic diversity of our pupils.

The school's curriculum has always been centred around the children in the school. Whilst meeting the requirements of the national curriculum, being part of a multi-academy trust (MAT) enables us to have freedom to adjust our curriculum to the needs of our school. We believe we have developed a balanced, rich and inspiring curriculum, which specifically meets the academic, personal and social needs of our pupils and develops them as "real learners". We have therefore adopted three curriculum drivers, which lie at the heart of our curriculum design and allow us to build on pupils' experiences and knowledge and to address any areas of development in terms of cultural capital.

Our curriculum drivers are:

- **Firsthand experiences.** Our children learn best through learning experiences outside of the classroom. We have a full and active calendar of events, which are aimed at developing the semantic rather than being one-off events in the children's memories.
- **Diversity.** Our children come from a wide variety of local areas and backgrounds. We need to instil within them an understanding and appreciation of the differences that exist in our school community, particularly cultural, so that everyone's rights and needs are understood.

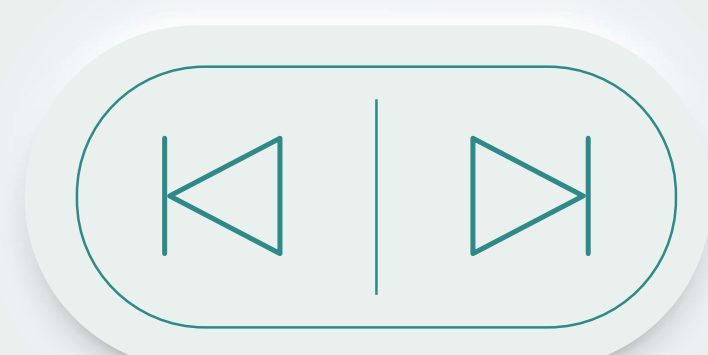
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- **Communication.** In today's world the ability to send and receive information, and understand speech and writing is paramount. We have an embedded approach to promote both verbal and nonverbal communication so that our children are able to interact in the world inside and outside school life.

Underpinning all of these are the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural development aspects of our Hearts and Mind Programme, all of which combine together to create a curriculum that supports not only the children's academic strength but also their wider development and social skills.

During the COVID pandemic our history leader attended training around diversity, which led to us revising the history curriculum. This work resulted in us reviewing our curriculum drivers to focus on our whole curriculum through the lens of diversity. We wanted to celebrate our diverse community and ensure that the children in our school were given a true representation of the society they were growing up in. We then worked to ensure the texts we used in our English lessons, and the books used across the curriculum, reflected a range of authors and had a variety of role models as characters. We ensured stories of Black inventors such as Lewis Latimer were included alongside their White counterparts so that our pupils could see the success of all groups of people.

We reflected on whether all our students were *seen* in all areas of the curriculum. We wanted to reflect our changing community in a meaningful way and knew that in the past we could have been tokenistic or superficial in our approach to other cultures and religious festivals. We added units about Hong Kong in geography in Year 2, and a unit on Black and British history in Year 6. We ensured that students studied the experiences of minority groups when learning about the world wars; and we diversified the artists that our pupils studied, beyond the traditional White males who dominated our previous curriculum. We worked to develop our assemblies so that they included music from all cultures and religions, and we started to invite parents in to discuss their lived experiences with the children.

For Book Week teachers all chose texts that reflected an ethnic minority group represented in their class. We also set up a focus group for parents who were passionate about equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as we wanted to be made accountable for our mission to be a diverse and fully inclusive community. It was during these focus group sessions that the parents challenged us on how we could become anti-racist. We discussed the parents' desire for all the children to feel truly understood, and the need for staff training around lived experience.

In June 2023 we attended our annual trust conference, where we listened to Bennie Kara, the founder of Diverse Educators. She spoke of the need to diversify the curriculum and the importance of addressing this issue fully in all schools and at all levels of responsibility. It was rare for all staff across the trust – from school leaders to teaching assistants and site staff – to be part of the same training. This signalled the importance being afforded to the issue.

We also heard from leaders of two secondary schools within our MAT, who took part in the Great Representation programme in 2022–23, and staff were inspired by the work that had been done in those schools. It was then that we knew we were at the right point to participate in the Great Representation programme so that we could further our own journey.

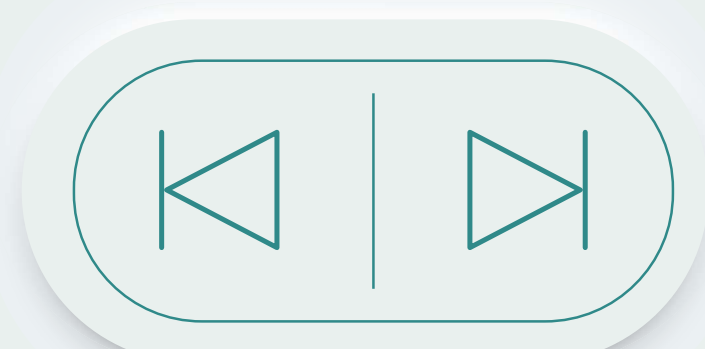
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## October 2023

We were very clear about what we wanted to achieve from this course, which was an increased understanding of EDI issues, professionally and also personally, so that we can be well equipped to support our staff and our families as we navigate our way through school and societal changes. We were seeking fresh ideas that would stretch our thought processes and therefore further develop our approach to EDI.

Within the first session, we were faced with the idea that this was bigger than curriculum changes and focus groups – rather it was about a culture change. We needed to transform our society because we do live in a racist society. There is no hiding from this, and the statistics speak for themselves. We learned from Professor Paul Miller that we needed to be courageous leaders who are intentional in what we do. This resonated with us both as leaders.

We were also inspired by Cynthia Rowe, headteacher of How Wood School, who spoke about the power of belonging. Children need to see themselves – if they can't see it, they can't be it. We had revamped our curriculum, but could our children see themselves in our curriculum? Did they feel it represents the communities that they are from? We decided to make a change to our school website, adding the strapline *There's a place for you here*, alongside our motto of educating hearts and minds.

When we returned to school, we reflected with our staff team about the statistics that had been shared and engaged in an open, honest discussion around the lived experiences of staff. It was clear staff felt they needed the tools and language to feel able to participate in conversations about race. Our staff from ethnic minority backgrounds shared their own experience and their loved ones' experience of racism. Some staff were uncomfortable, purely because they did not want to offend anyone. From this point, we knew this year was an opportunity to find some common parlance in our school community and give our staff and, in turn, our pupils the vocabulary to have continued conversations about race.

Whilst we had been observing our school community changing, it wasn't until we presented the statistics to the education standards committee for SET that we truly realised how diverse we had become. Our data showed us clearly the changes in our cohorts: our Year 6 cohort has 18% minority ethnic students, and our newest Reception class has 63%. We decided to review the school website, asking ourselves, *Does this represent us now?* The answer was no, so we set about updating the website with new photography and visual imagery that presented the true face of Harpenden Academy.

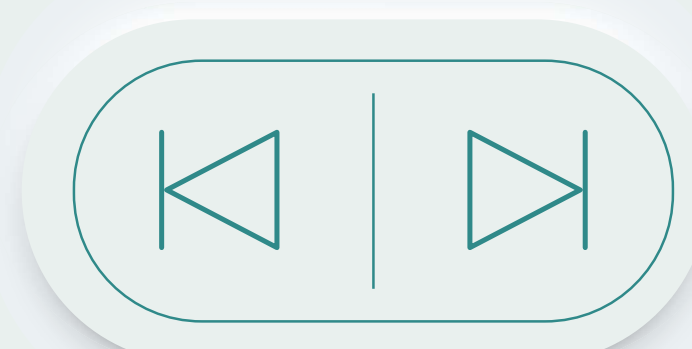
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## November 2023

Ahead of our second Great Representation seminar, we had our first parent tour of the year. During this tour one prospective parent commented that the school felt like a family. We felt proud that our school was being seen by others as a place where everyone belonged. After the new and more representative website had been set up, we noticed a range of parents from ethnic minorities signing up to new Reception tours. Once the tours are completed, we will be able to survey the parents to see what initially encouraged them to look around Harpenden Academy, and we can use this information to guide us further.

At our second Great Representation seminar we heard a series of profoundly personal journeys, which left us questioning whether we actually did have a handle on understanding racism in our society. We had both thought we were further down the journey than perhaps we were. Lisa originates from Birmingham – a place very different to Harpenden. Growing up in the West Midlands in the 70s, there was no doubt that racism existed on many levels. It was deeply saddening to hear the continued, ingrained conscious and unconscious racism and prejudice the speakers such as Claire Stewart-Hall, Sufian Sadiq and Shammi Rahman spoke of.

We were shocked. *Really? Is this STILL happening? Have we not evolved at all?* We wouldn't have labelled ourselves as naïve, but we actually now think that we must be. We are so fortunate to work in a school where racism rarely rears its head. We have made strong inroads into our curriculum, and our children are somewhat cocooned and protected at school from the prejudice that clearly exists in the wider world.

All three speakers talked about the power of culture and community and how belonging to a specific community group meant that perceptions inside the group were different to those outside the group. This was most keenly brought into focus with Sufian Sadiq's presentation, part of which focused on the ongoing situation within Palestine and the portrayal of this crisis in the media. His passion and fervent belief are so very much intertwined with his life and community that this is an ever-present issue for him.

While we were watching the news, hearing the news, reading the newspapers, the issue was not all-consuming to us. It didn't resonate in the same way as it did for him because of our different lived experience. It was horrific to us but it wasn't personal, as it was for him. We reflected on the differences in our lived experiences and the impact this has on our work on racial equity.

We have staff and students in our school community who are affected by the conflict, and this had been discussed in our school environment. Were we avoiding the issues surrounding the war as we did not have the lived experience? The day gave us a deeper level of understanding. The next weekend, travelling into London at the same time as the protest marches were taking place, Lisa was able to put herself inside the

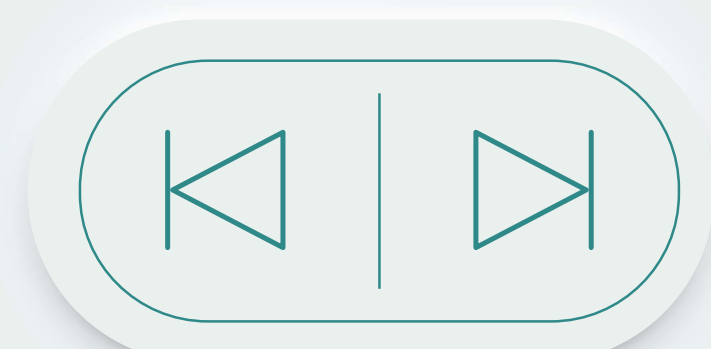
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demonstrators' heads and understand the level of commitment and passion being shown. Something we noted on Day 2 seemed even more pertinent now:

Diversity of thought is important – even if everyone around the table is White, each person needs to have a diversity of thought. If you can't have a diversity of lived experience, you can have a diversity of thought.

– Valery Giscard d'Estaing

On our return to school, we focused on the intentionality of using this course to shape changes within the school. We had already created a diversity action group in school, comprising teachers, governors and interested parents.

At the meeting this month, the content of the course was discussed, and it was collectively decided that we must make sure that the issues raised are tackled. At the meeting it was agreed that, as we have all five of the major faiths represented in our school, we would create a cultural calendar and ensure that a whole-school celebration of each faith would happen during the year. Due to the timing, we took Christmas as the first festival to be celebrated. This calendar is to be published to the school so that everyone is aware of the intention but also informed enough to take part. We also discussed the need for a celebration for Lunar New Year, due to our increasing group of children from Hong Kong.

Beyond that, we agreed that we want to recruit teachers and teaching assistants to represent the world faiths we have in school. We had quite in-depth discussion around whether we are using the best recruitment platforms to get the diversity of applicants we desire. This led to consideration of how the trust could facilitate this.

After the meeting, our governor representative spoke with Ceiri about the level of confidence she had shown when delivering the session. The governor reflected that she felt Ceiri had been empowered with the language to have discussions around race, to respond to parents' questions and, if challenged, to be comfortable to give answers based on the discussions in our seminars.

## December 2023

Before the third seminar, we undertook a school visit to Holy Family Catholic School in Welwyn Garden City. It was insightful for us to visit a Catholic school. It was clear that staff had worked on the idea of belonging for all children. On display was a world map, titled "Do I See Myself?" This brought the children into the centre of the school's work. This led us to ask ourselves two questions:

1. Do our children see themselves in the school?
2. Do they feel like they belong?



World map titled "Do I See Myself?"

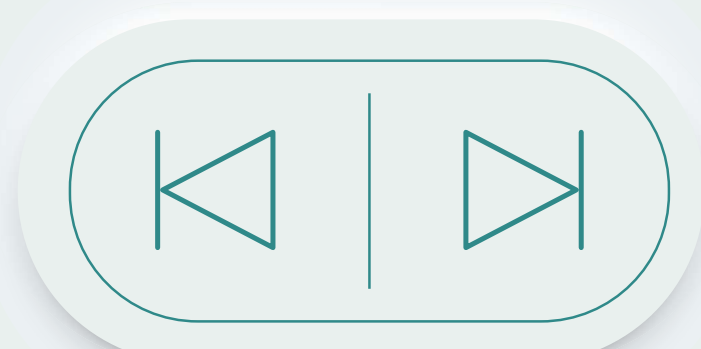
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We asked the children at Holy Family these questions during a pupil voice session, and it was apparent these children were brought together through their shared faith and the shared experiences they had through communions. One child spoke about how Jesus helped him to fit in. The children discussed the texts they were using in the classroom and what Dame Floella Benjamin's book *Coming to England* had taught them. We loved the idea of a whole-school text and felt this was something we could definitely introduce at Harpenden Academy, with significant impact.

This brought us to our third seminar, beginning with a session from Bennie Kara. Whilst we were aware of Bennie's work through our trust, we came away with some tools for *How* we can change what we do in school. This was in contrast to the first two seminars, which had helped us with the *Why*. Bennie spoke about having a broad and balanced view in the curriculum so that we can eradicate victim narratives. She gave a John Lewis analogy: John Lewis do not apologise for the representation of different groups in modern Britain through their Christmas advertising, so why should we worry about such representation in the content of our curriculum?

She also highlighted that none of our work to diversify our curriculum should be to put anyone on a pedestal. It is not to signify difference and not to be a shrine. This is just how it should be. We questioned whether our previous work on curriculum was truly meaningful and whether the work we had undertaken still had relevance. We chose to share our journal and details of these visits with our staff at one of our final staff meetings of the year, before staff began to plan their next units of work, to keep this in the forefront of their minds.

## January 2024

As we progress through the course, and after the experiences we have had on our visits to other schools, our thoughts continually return to the idea of belonging. If people have a sense of belonging and being part of and included in something bigger than themselves, then a fundamental need is met. This leads to positive and meaningful interactions, collaboration, problem solving and better decisions, rather than division and pack mentality. Through researching this idea, Shammi Rahman's words rang true: "You can't build a society purely on interests; you need a sense of belonging." We have seen this as the golden thread through all of the seminars and visits that we have had to date on this course: the power of belonging.

With this thought swirling around our brains, we found the visit to Mount Grace Secondary School very impactful. This school had taken the very brave decision to allow the hub group to meet with a cluster of BAME pupils who were effectively disenfranchised from education. The school wanted to address this issue head-on. The discussion was both illuminating and indicative of how deeply some issues ran within the psyche of the pupils.

While at times the pupils found it hard to articulate their feelings fully to a group of White, middle-class, middle-aged primary heads, what came from their discussion was the sense that racism is everywhere, racism is their norm, and that's just how it is. It felt that the pupils had the weight of years of negative interactions on their shoulders and that sometimes the weight became too great and triggered a reaction. We applaud the school for allowing us this conversation. It very clearly served as a reminder that, in the pursuit of greater representation, we still have some way to go.

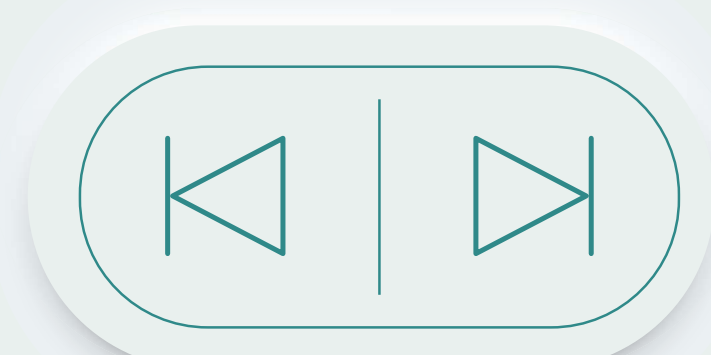
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It was interesting to learn that after we left, some of the boys in our discussion group went back to the member of SLT who had set the meeting up and spoke more frankly and openly to them, showing that they felt comfortable to do so, and believed that what they had to say was going to be listened to. This showed that, while on the surface the pupils were disengaged, the reality is that they felt connected enough and belonging enough to speak more openly, unprompted.

Listening to the work of Professor David Gillborn at our next seminar was timely, as it focused on racism in education and what we can do about it. The boys from Mount Grace came back into our heads. David used a quotation from Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's book, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*:

Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture. Formal equal opportunity – rules and laws that insist on treating Blacks and Whites (for example) alike – can thus remedy only the more extreme and shocking forms of injustice, the ones that do stand out. It can do little about the business as usual forms of racism that people of color confront every day.

This powerful programme, and the rich diet of learning we have been given while on it, is creating actions, processes and understanding within our schools to help us address race equality so that we can tackle the *business-as-usual* forms of racism, which erode self-belief and worth and create conflict. It is becoming increasingly clear to us that this cohort of Great Representation schools, plus the two previous cohorts, are becoming the critical mass within Hertfordshire that Professor David Gillborn advocates is needed to help address the racism in education that is normalising race inequality.

We discussed afterwards the concept of the colour of ability. We found this fascinating and vowed that, on our return to school, this would be a focus of a staff meeting. This, along with looking at the data for our school regarding exclusions of BAME learners, progress of BAME learners and interventions for BAME learners, is where we are turning the spotlight in the summer term.

The final keynote of the seminar, led by the headteacher of Mount Grace School, Geeta Patel, was as uplifting as it was entertaining. Geeta focused on finding your sense of belonging. She showed a positive pathway through her life as she challenged herself, and then her children, to be in control of their decisions, not to put barriers in their own way, and to belong in whatever they chose as their world – be it Cambridge University, ballet or film and theatre.

The message Geeta instilled to her children was one of *You belong in this world*. This fierce championing of self and of children to belong in their world is one that is not just to be admired but also emulated in our school establishments. Geeta is steering the pupils in her school to have the same drive and belief so that they can belong and succeed in their own world.

We have been excited about developing our religious celebrations within school to highlight all of our children. Lunar New Year was coming up, and we wanted to celebrate this in a way that was special to our school: through creativity! Each Christmas we decorate our entrance hall, so why could we not do this for

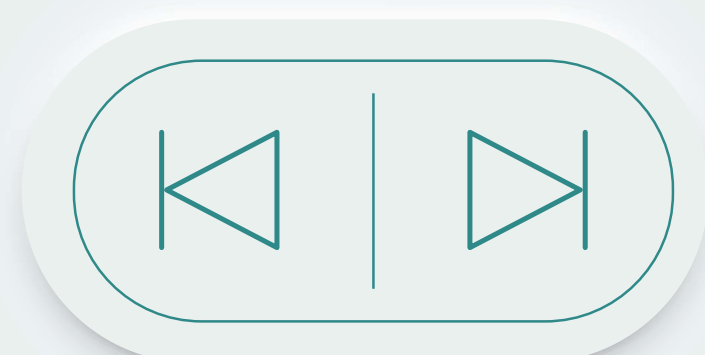
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Lunar New Year? Each class made decorations for their classroom and the entrance hall, and a wonderfully talented teaching assistant drew the animals from the zodiac to hang from the ceiling. Parents offered to come and talk in each class about their celebrations, and texts with Asian families and new year celebrations were shared throughout the school. There was a buzz in school, which signified to us that celebrating and showcasing the heritage of our families will be important to embed as an annual tradition.

## February 2024

We found the latest Great Representation session very interesting. In November, at the height of the Palestine–Israel conflict, we heard from impassioned speakers about how their lives had been directly affected by the conflict and how as schools we need to acknowledge the impact on the community. It was very difficult to not be touched and moved. Jump forward to February, and Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga, from UCL’s Centre of Holocaust Education, was addressing the worrying rise in antisemitic incidents and behaviour on the streets and campuses around the UK. This was really thought-provoking. She asked why there appeared to be a deep-rooted level of antisemitism – ever present but increasing and, in her words, “staining society again”.

The examples she gave and the images she used were sobering, calling back from our memory banks images long associated with the full Holocaust of World War II. Yet this wasn’t 1945 – it was 2024 – and these events were not in another country but were in Edgware, Golders Green and Manchester, where Jewish people live in numbers.

Her questions to the audience were:

- [Why does it seem to be OK to be anti-Jewish?](#)
- [Why, when 0.5% of the total population in the UK is Jewish, and 0.02% of the world population is Jewish, does it seem that it’s OK to be anti-Jewish?](#)

We had never considered this. That is why this course is so valuable, because it opens up questions and thoughts that we haven’t even been aware of and may never have occurred to us before. This is critical to us as leaders in a school, because if we are aware then we can make sure that we are empowering, advocating and creating active citizens that can challenge any racism and can make a difference to someone’s day-to-day existence.

## March 2024

At the beginning of March, it was time for our last hub meeting, and this time we would be hosting at our own school. It was slightly unnerving, as the other visits this year had been so impactful on our practice. Could our school have impact? Has this course had the impact on our school that we hoped?

Coincidentally, the visit coincided with Book Week and our conscious decision to use the story *Coming to England* throughout each class in the school. Retrospectively, we

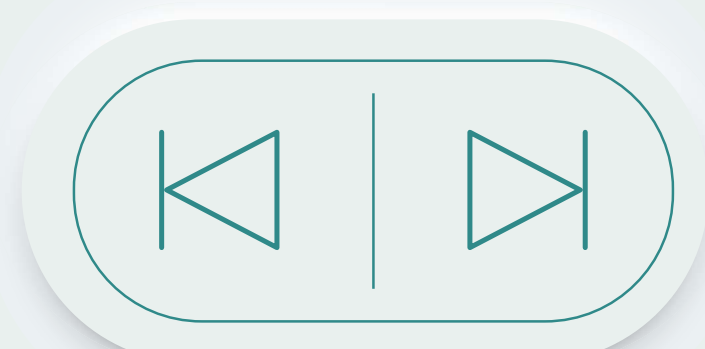
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had praised ourselves for using diverse texts in previous years. This year, though, we reflected on our tokenistic approach and how this course has shown us how we can use texts more meaningfully. Staff were positive about the approach, and throughout the week there were many staffroom conversations around personal responses to Dame Floella Benjamin's story, and also around the powerful discussions that were had inside our classrooms.

During the visit, we set up groups of children from across the school, from all backgrounds, to answer questions about their experience at Harpenden Academy:

1. Can you remember a time at school when you learnt about someone who looks/speaks/lives like you?
2. Do you feel like you belong at Harpenden Academy?
3. Do you think the adults in school understand your race/culture?
4. Have you experienced racism at school? What happened?
5. Do you think the adults in school understand what racism is? What do you think it is?
6. Who would you speak to if you felt that you were a victim of racism at school?
7. Do you feel confident sharing your background and culture with others in your class?

The responses were overwhelmingly positive. One Year 6 pupil compared his experience at our school with his old one, stating, "At this school diversity is embedding in all we do. Not all schools are like this one." Our children could share that they felt part of the school community and felt represented.

We were reassured that our children said there was no racism in our school. However, if this year has taught us one thing, racism is everywhere; and perhaps our children did not fully see or understand the nuances behind it. We need to continue to develop an anti-racist stance with our children, far beyond the days on this course. We also wanted to gather more than a sample of pupil voice, and we plan to send a whole-school questionnaire to fully understand the picture at Harpenden Academy from a child's perspective.

Unfortunately, in subsequent weeks, we had our first two recorded racist incidents. One was shared anecdotally at the end of a staff meeting by one of the teachers, who did not seem to consider it to be serious. Were we brushing racism under the carpet? Did our children not recognise racism as our staff were unclear about it too? We spoke with staff about developing a consistent approach to racist incidents, with a policy pending. We made everyone aware that, no matter how small, we must be reporting all incidents and following them up.

Our thoughts turned to September and how children become part of new communities, with new teachers, teaching assistants and – often, in our school – new members of the class. We discussed how our theme of *belonging* needed to be at the centre of our back-to-school activities and how we would like everyone in each class to fully understand each other's heritage and background from the outset of the year.

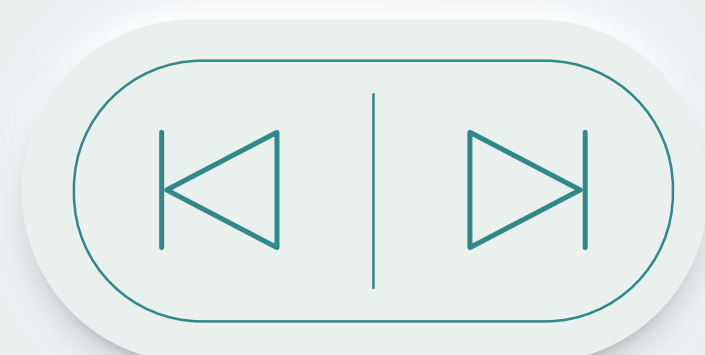
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We also began recruitment for teaching positions in September and saw the fruits of our intentionality to showcase our school community through our website. Changing the pictures on our school website and adding the strapline *You have a place here* were changes made directly as a result of the first meeting on the course. We felt this was important to us as a school, and also to the children in our school who were not previously represented. We had little idea how important these changes would be.

This year we have had applications from teachers and teaching assistants from a range of backgrounds previously unseen. We felt the shortlisted candidates reflected our BAME community, and one prospective teacher commented on how she was encouraged by the strapline *You have a place here*. This is a major step forward for us as a school, and we genuinely believe it is because candidates are encouraged to apply – just like the children, they can see that people that *look like me* are welcome at school. With appointments made, we are potentially starting our next academic year with a staff that truly represents our children, and that is an achievement!

As we prepared for the final session of the course, and for our chance to speak about the successes of the year to the whole cohort, we reflected on how far we had come but also where we need to continue to go. At the start of this journey of discovery – for that is what we both see it as – we said that we wanted: an increased understanding of EDI issues, professionally and also personally, so that we can be well equipped to support our staff and our families as we navigate our way through school and societal changes.

We both feel that this course has transformed us, professionally and personally, and we want to continue to share this impact with our staff, children and parents. We are sure that, over the next year and beyond, we will be drawing on our experiences and our learning from the course as we face more challenges from the outside world impacting on our children. We won't have all the answers, but we will have the tools to help us find them.

*Lisa Davies and Ceiri Withers*

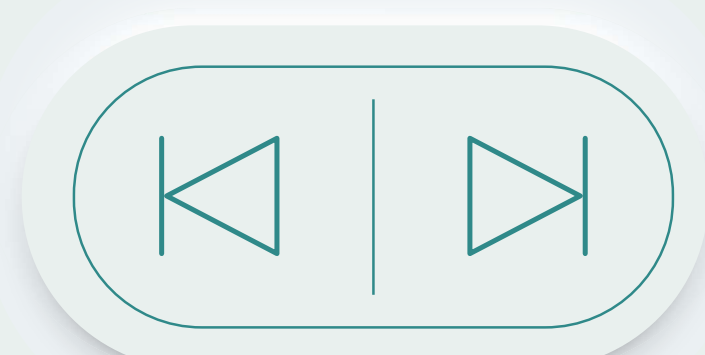
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# HILLSHOTT INFANT SCHOOL AND NURSERY

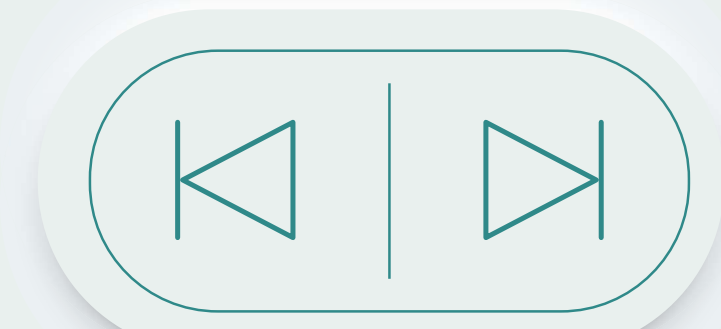
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### September 2023

Hillshott Infant and Nursery School is in Letchworth, North Hertfordshire. It is a two-form-entry school, with a 52-place nursery. Pupils come from a range of more than 15 ethnic backgrounds, with the majority of children being White British (79%). Currently, 24% of pupils from Nursery to Year 2 are known to be in receipt of pupil premium funding. Approximately 18% of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), including 2.8% who have an education, health and care plan (EHCP), and 15% currently require SEN support. Of 39 staff members, six are not White British, with five of these being appointed in the last six years. The governing body has nine members, of which seven are White British.

We began our journey towards greater race equity and representation last academic year. There was no particular trigger for this other than an awareness that it was an area we could develop further. We began with a linked performance management target for many staff, including the headteacher, to ensure that race equity was seen as a priority. We developed an action plan for equality and diversity, with targets and actions for each term focusing around staff training, curriculum resources and stakeholders. These included:

- to provide CPD for staff on equality and diversity
- to complete an audit of the curriculum to fully embed racial diversity and representation
- to consider strategies to increase the number of staff from Black, Asian and ethnically minoritised groups

Our HCC Commissioned School Visit in December 2022 was on race equality, and Toks Olusamokun, HFL Education race equity adviser, worked with us to identify strengths and areas to develop, including further developing our curriculum and resources. One INSET day in January was dedicated to subject leaders exploring their subject under a *race lens*. This included looking at the curriculum maps to see where content could be made more inclusive and representative of the community, e.g. texts used in English lessons, historical figures studied, artists focused on in art and music. Following this, we had a whole-school display of “Inspirational People”, where each class chose a person to research and represent, e.g. Marcus Rashford, Frida Kahlo, Mae Jemison.

Teachers have attended eight INSET sessions and staff meetings on anti-racism in education with Esher Williams from OK To Be. This work has included looking at the foundations of racism, the importance of racial identity, tackling racism in the classroom, and advocating for those in your care. The training was thought-provoking and challenging, and the discussions – both during the training and between sessions – were very valuable. Working with an external partner with expertise in anti-racism was useful, and staff felt more confident following the training in tackling racism and being anti-racist.

In addition to the in-school training, leaders attended HFL Education’s Building an anti-racist school CPD and their National Race Equity Conference, and this training was cascaded to all members of staff.

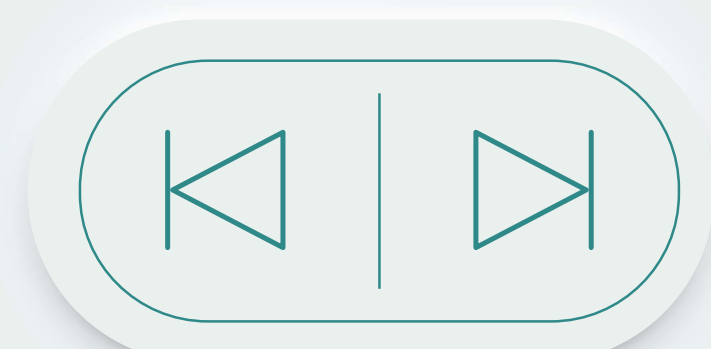
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We have worked hard to raise the profile of equality, diversity and inclusivity with families and have included information in the weekly school newsletter and questions on our school questionnaire, for example:

- The school celebrates diverse cultures, people and experiences in its teaching. (Yes – 96.9%)
- The school has an inclusive environment that enables all children to thrive. (Yes – 100%)

We have purchased a range of books exploring anti-racism for our staff library. Any articles of interest are circulated via email for staff to read. Governors have been kept up to date on our journey during curriculum meetings and governing body meetings. We are committed to developing race equity and representation at Hillshott. Being part of the Great Representation cohort will consolidate our work from the last year and help us to continue to develop it further.

### October 2023

Day 1 of the Great Representation programme saw us arranged into hub groups. Each school gave a brief presentation about their context and spoke about where they were on their journey towards race equality and equity. The four schools in our hub are very different in location and context. They include a secondary school, a Catholic primary school, a Church of England primary school, and our own school.

Listening to the speakers, we learned about systemic race inequity in the UK and looked at national data compared with Hertfordshire data. Some of the statistics were shocking and emphasised our essential role as educators in supporting all children to achieve their potential; and the importance of all children feeling represented in the school workforce, in books and in the curriculum we provide for them. This message was further supported during Paul Miller's keynote speech, where we heard about case studies of school leaders leading curriculum inclusion, anti-racism and tackling race inequality. Finally, Cynthia Rowe, a Hertfordshire headteacher, talked us through her Great Representation journey and was very inspirational.

On 26 September we had a visit from local author Gemma Keir, who has written an inclusive book series, called *The Abilities in Me*. These books celebrate what children with disabilities *can* do, rather than what they cannot do. The purpose of the visit was to raise awareness of different abilities and promote kindness and understanding amongst children from a range of diverse backgrounds. Gemma's books are based on real children with SEN and include characters from Black, Brown and mixed-heritage families.

As we entered October, our English lead audited the books we have in our library that reference people from a range of diverse backgrounds. These books have been fully integrated and spread throughout the library, rather than segregated into their own section, in order to promote inclusivity. The resulting list of books and authors ensures that staff are still able to find specific books if required.

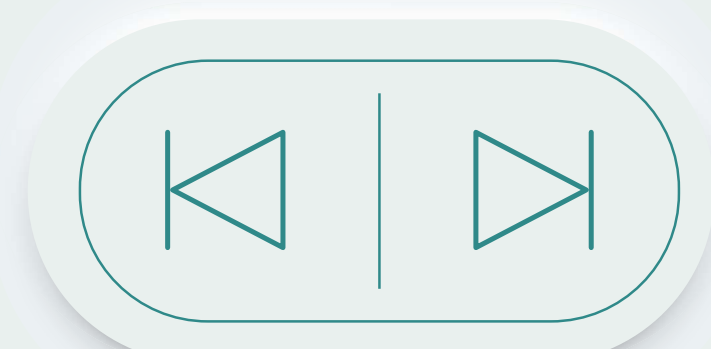
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To link in with Black History Month, class teachers ensured that some of their planning, books and teaching resources incorporated a range of skin colours and cultural heritages. For example, in Year 1 the children used a book called *My Two Grannies* by Dame Floella Benjamin to support their activities in English. This encouraged discussions with children about race at an age-appropriate level.

Our first hub visit, to Pope Paul Primary School on 17 October, provided us with a good opportunity to discuss initial steps and changes we had all put into place. The school had begun lots of work on diversity and inclusion, and we were lucky to visit during their One World Week. We had a tour of the school, and leaders pointed out recent displays that celebrated children's heritages. Each year group were studying a country, and the children were able to talk to us with enthusiasm and confidence about their learning. We were inspired to consider our own focus week in the summer term and to renew our displays in school.

Andrew Moffat visited Hillshott on 18 October to share his teaching of "No Outsiders". He taught all classes from Nursery to Year 2 and led the staff meeting at the end of the day. This complemented our work on race equality, and the children were able to discuss differences and similarities in appearances, families and abilities. The message was clear that we all belong at Hillshott – everyone is welcome. We can accept differences and respect one another, even if we have different views.

### November 2023

Performance management appraisals were completed for all members of staff by the beginning of November. Continuing from the previous year's practice, we ensured that the targets included a focus on diversity. Examples include:

- to further develop work on diversity and equity in school
- to strengthen and refine the school's curriculum, ensuring it is purposeful, engaging and tailored to the children at Hillshott

Subject leaders continue to revisit the long-term and medium-term plans to ensure the curriculum is relevant to our children and that the resources in school reflect this. Our art subject leader sent a link to all staff members to access a Padlet – a digital platform that allows teachers to access pictures, videos, timelines, files and other information about a range of diverse artists in one central location – featuring many of the artists in our long-term planning.

Following on from our whole-school training with Andrew Moffat in October, we began weekly "No Outsiders" class assemblies. Each focuses on a photograph, which each class discusses together. In our celebration assembly on Fridays, we revisit the photograph as a whole school. Each photo lends itself to the theme that, although we may have differences in appearance, families and opinions, this does not mean that we cannot respect each other. We do not have to be the same to be friends, which fits well with our Great Representation work.

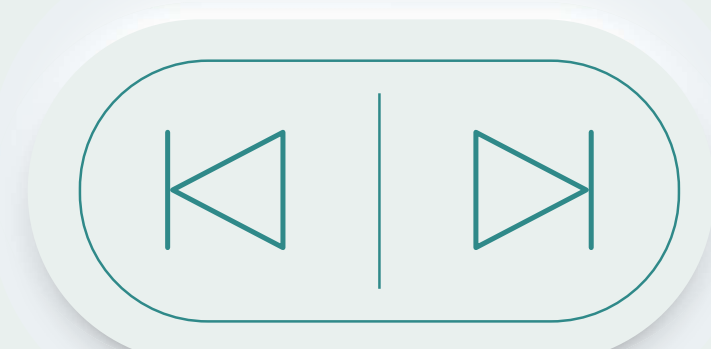
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On 3 November we attended the second seminar for the Great Representation programme. We listened to three very inspiring speakers, who all left us with things to think about. Claire Stewart-Hall talked about institutional racism, Sufian Sadiq discussed racial equity and shared some of his personal experiences, whilst Shammi Rahman talked about why being silent did not give her protection. We reflected on how we as children learnt about racism and considered the importance of topical issues and how this may affect people's views on racism.

After this seminar, we were inspired to undertake some pupil voice on *belonging* in our school. On 10 November we spoke to 14 children to discuss where they felt they belonged, both inside and outside of school. The discussion was very positive, and the children were able to talk about belonging to their families, to their class and to Hillshott. The children felt they did not belong to countries they had never visited before. They were able to talk about how to make new pupils feel welcome at our school and were clear that everyone belonged, even if they looked different.

Following on from our increased work on diversity in school, we decided to include some targeted questions in our staff questionnaire, which was sent out in November:

- Do you feel confident talking about race and skin colour with children? If not, what would help you?
- How can we promote and celebrate different cultures and heritage within our school community?

Of the 21 responses, 20 staff members felt confident talking about race and skin colour with children. The one staff member who lacked confidence did not identify ways we could further support. In our feedback, we will remind staff how to access further support. We received some excellent ideas for celebrating different cultures and heritage, which we will look to implement. This includes a cultural week, with children learning about a variety of different cultures, having the opportunities to cook and taste food, having family members invited into school to share their heritage and culture, and facilitating the creation of a cookery book with favourite family recipes.

### December 2023

At the end of November we visited Nobel School, a large secondary school in Stevenage. We were interested to find out how older students are supported and how diversity is encouraged as they enter their final years of schooling. We could then compare this with the early years that we experience at Hillshott. After attending a staff CPD session on questioning, we had a tour around the school. We spoke with a number of staff members and pupils from a range of different backgrounds and watched some lessons taking place. The shared environment (corridors, etc) highlighted the importance of having aspirations, with numerous posters and photographs displayed around the school celebrating where students had moved on to for further study and what past students were doing now. They included people from a variety of backgrounds and cultural heritages. We also saw photographs of current students receiving awards for their accomplishments at school. Speaking to a group of students made it clear that these displays help to foster aspirations in them and the belief that they can do anything they want to if they work hard.

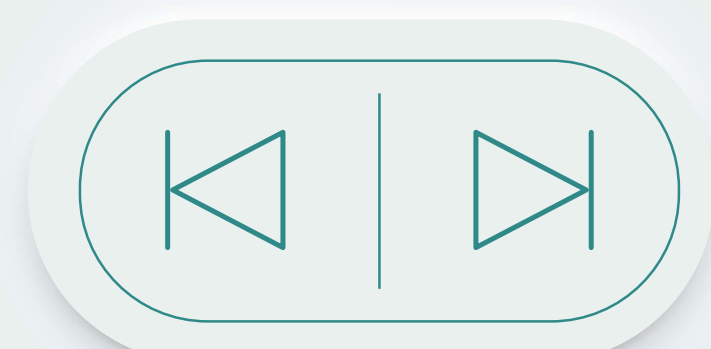
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The students we spoke to were proud to be Nobelians, and there was a clear sense of belonging. Whilst some of them expressed that they had experienced racism at school, they felt that it was dealt with fairly. The students also have an opportunity to contribute to displays and to lead events. The student council, led by a head boy and a head girl, have previously run a cultural food festival. This encouraged pupils to try food from a range of cuisines from around the world. This is something they really enjoyed and felt valued in leading. Another student spoke of a Polish club she had joined, which enabled her to feel welcome and make friends with other children from a similar background.

As part of our wider reading, we have purchased a number of books. One example is *I Heard What You Said* by Jeffrey Boakye – an honest and often funny account of the author’s teaching career as a secondary school English teacher. He tackles the subject of racism with a clear vision of how we can challenge stereotypes, assumptions and the outdated curriculum: “We need to equip children with a language and a context with which to understand racism and enter meaningfully into the debate. Not being racist is not good enough. It’s time to become anti-racist.”

Day 3 of the Great Representation programme focused on the *How*, following on from the *Why* of Days 1 and 2. It was very interesting to focus on diversity in the curriculum. Bennie Kara encouraged us to think in a meaningful way beyond token gestures and move towards including diverse content. She encouraged us to move from performative allyship to proactive allyship. Following this input, we constructed a list of questions for subject leaders to consider at their next curriculum review in January:

- Is the curriculum logical?
- Is it compliant?
- Is it reflective of the local community?
- Where is the teaching of protected characteristics?
- Is it embedded and usualised?

Although we have already worked hard on our curriculum, consideration of these questions will help to develop it further.

Headteacher Seb Gray from New Bradwell Primary School shared the inspiring story of the journey of his previous school – Laurence Haines – towards greater diversity. He urged us to motivate, encourage, inspire and be inspired. Laurie O’Brien, headteacher of Chater Junior School, outlined the importance of courage and bravery and considering the ongoing commitment to equity and diversity, rather than seeing it as a quick fix.

One of our teachers undertaking further study shared two blogs with the rest of the staff, the content of which focused on diversity and inclusion. The first one is featured on [diverseeducators.co.uk](https://diverseeducators.co.uk). It is entitled “How to Talk with Children and Young People about Race and Racism” and written by Sarah Soyei from EqualTeach (2020). The second one is featured on [nesta.org.uk](https://nesta.org.uk) and entitled “Why we need an anti-racist approach in early years education”, by Liz Pemberton (2022). Both articles were an interesting read and aligned with Great Representation by encouraging people to get talking from an early age rather than ignoring questions from children about race, and to challenge stereotypes.

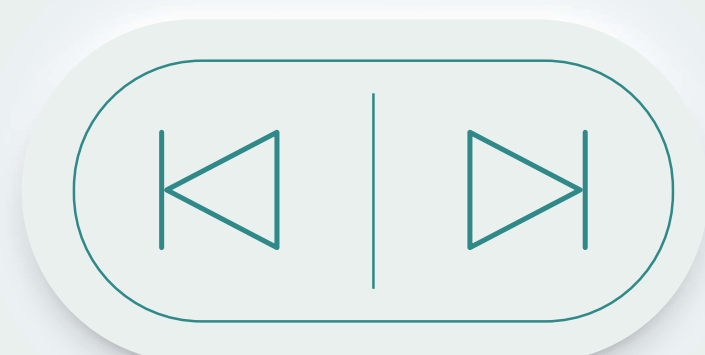
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## January 2024

Following on from the Day 3 input, we had some time during the INSET day in January to revisit our curriculum. Subject leaders reviewed their existing curriculum, considering the questions outlined in our December entry. Updated subject policies included a section on “Diversity in the curriculum”.

The children in our school took part in a local writing project based on the book *Here We Are* by Oliver Jeffers. The story celebrates all living things on our planet and provides a great opportunity for discussions to be had around diversity and belonging. By the end of the project, our pupils had generated some lovely poems and display boards inspired by the book. Quotes from some of the children’s poems include: “We love our planet earth” and “Animals are fabulous. Some are furry, some are slimy, some can run and others can walk”.

We have also started to introduce world music for children to listen to as they walk into singing assembly. The music covers a range a different cultures and music styles, such as reggae, blues and gospel. At the beginning of each assembly, children are taught about the style of music, who performed it, and where it originates from. This enables children’s listening repertoire to be broadened and other cultures from around the world to be celebrated.

On 15 January our next hub visit took us to Leverstock Green Church of England Primary School on the outskirts of Hemel Hempstead. We were given a tour of the school by pupils, who were very proud to belong to the school. They spoke enthusiastically about their teachers and learning and were keen to show us every part of the school, both inside and out. Classroom displays were full of pictures of the children and their families, and the pupils we spoke to have a strong sense of belonging.

The HFL Education National Disadvantaged Conference took place on 17 January. This is always an inspirational day, and this year was no different. We heard from Lemn Sissay, a poet of Ethiopian and Greek heritage, who grew up in the care system in the North of England. His memoir, *My Name is Why*, is interspersed with social workers’ reports, letters, school reports and other documentation, which it took him 30 years to gain access to. He writes about the racism he faced as a child, including his nickname “Chalky-White”; and his foster mother dragging a fine-toothed metal comb through his afro hair, which she said only hurt him because he had “hair sore”.

On 22 January we attended the fourth seminar of the Great Representation programme. Professor David Gillborn was our first speaker. He presented statistics, which showed that in schools the pupil population nationally is more diverse than the general population, whereas the ethnicity of teachers is less diverse than that of the general population. Inequality remains significant and persistent, and racism can be complex, subtle and extensive. We were encouraged to critique our own behaviours, considering what we can do in our own schools and beyond to address race inequity.

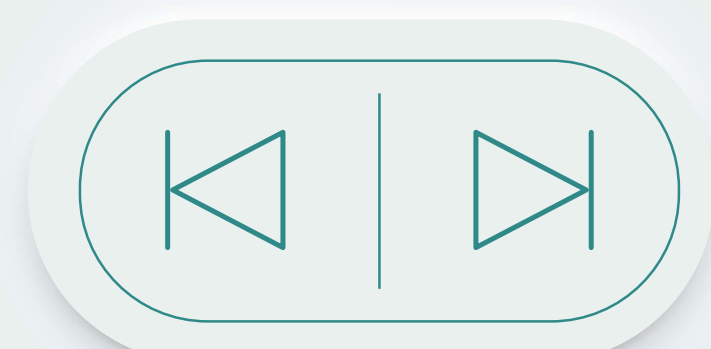
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Toks Olusamokun led a valuable session on “Dealing with Racist Incidents in School”. We had time to discuss different scenarios and consider what we would do in each situation if it occurred in our own schools. This session highlighted the need for us to revisit our policies to ensure that they are clear and robust. Finally, Geeta Patel, the headteacher of Mount Grace School in Potters Bar, spoke to us about her perspective as an ethnic minority pupil, student and headteacher, and also as a parent. She spoke passionately about belonging. We were left with the question, *Do children feel they belong in our school?* If they do, they will be able to achieve well, often exceeding expectations of them.

### February 2024

During our hub visits we had noticed lots of displays focusing on inclusion and diversity. This is something we have developed at Hillshott over the last year. We also wanted to focus on our curriculum and help children to make links with their learning. Our latest display boards include “Find yourself in a book”, where children are signposted to books within our library that include a variety of protagonists. Our “Learning around the world” display shows how our curriculum includes learning from all around the globe, including the Arctic, Australia and Africa. We have a display focusing on the poet Benjamin Zephaniah, with the children’s own poems showcased alongside his.

We are always looking to expand our range of books and resources featuring people from different backgrounds. We therefore purchased additional books, for the school classrooms, that incorporate stories and characters that link to some of our pupils’ heritage, e.g. *My Brown Skin* by Thomishia Booker.

We have been working hard to involve parents in various ways in their children’s education. We have a strong parent teacher association (PTA), the “Friends of Hillshott”, who work hard to raise money for the school. PTA members are diverse and reflect the different ethnicities of children. We would like to encourage parents of underrepresented groups to take on key roles within the PTA. Families come into school for Welcome Wednesdays and Family Fridays in the EYFS. During this time they play alongside their children, and school staff are available to support and talk about developing learning through play.

Spring term also sees our cycle of class assemblies begin. Families are invited to watch their child’s class assembly, with a focus on recent learning across the curriculum. All children are involved in the assembly and are able to showcase their work. One class had introduced a daily positive affirmation to develop the children’s self-esteem and shared these with us: *I am brave, I am strong, I am kind.*

On 29 February we attended the fifth seminar of the Great Representation programme. Our first speaker was Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga from UCL’s Centre of Holocaust Education. She spoke to us about addressing antisemitism. This gave us a real insight into the ongoing racism experienced by Jewish people, which has intensified since the war in Gaza. It was horrifying to see how children attending Jewish schools within Hertfordshire are facing abuse and violence on a daily basis. This reminded us of the importance of educating all children about anti-racism. We need to ensure discussions about bias and prejudice take place from the very beginning of education.

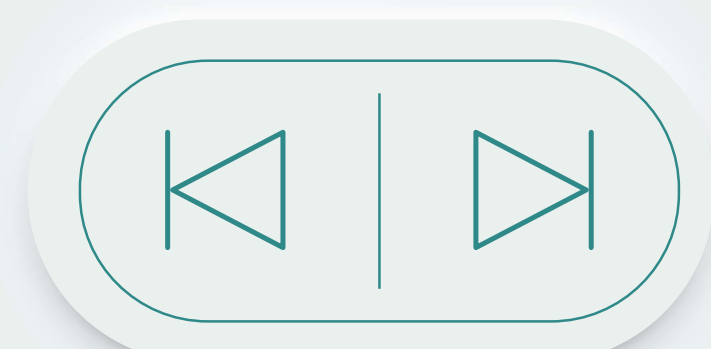
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Next we heard from Penny Rabiger about creating an anti-racist school. She presented lots of information from her research and challenged us with the question *What will you do next?* Her message about the need to be consistent is important. Educating children about diversity and equity is ongoing and needs to be regular, and both planned into the curriculum *and* when an opportunity presents.

One of the most interesting elements of the Great Representation programme has been learning from local schools about their own journeys. We heard, for example, from Margaret Wix Primary School all about *The Wix Way*. Margaret Wix took part in the second cohort of the programme and had seen a great impact. The staff and children spoke enthusiastically about the changes they had made within the curriculum to develop cultural capital, enrichment and pupil leadership. It was clear that the school was a very special, inclusive place, and that the pupils were very proud of it. Rebecca Woode, headteacher of Woodlands Primary, spoke to us about the positive progress she has seen since her own school days. She encouraged us to stand up for what we believe in, and to check in with others and talk, even though some conversations may be difficult.

Another book we have available in our staff library is *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge. This book explores Black history in the UK, with links between class and race, and the idea of Blackness and criminality being inherently interlinked. Reni argues against the concept of colour-blindness, stating that "Seeing race is essential to changing the system." This book was challenging to read at times but underlines the importance and urgency of the anti-racist movement.

One of our members of staff came across an article as part of her personal research, entitled "How to have open and honest conversations with children about racism" by Jaspreet Kaur. This article helped to consolidate our prior training, and it was shared with all staff as a useful resource.

### March 2024

Our final hub visit took place at the end of March. We were pleased to welcome representatives from two schools to Hillshott. We observed two "No Outsiders" class assemblies, in Reception and Year 2. Pupils were discussing a picture of a young girl with glasses and the main character from the Disney film *Encanto*. This showed their understanding of difference and inclusivity. Our visitors were able to see how the children's emotional literacy has developed over time. Our diverse displays and resources were highlighted during the school tour. Following this, two of our senior leaders shared some curriculum changes we have made since embarking on our journey.

We have begun to develop an anti-racism policy, which will include a flowchart of how we respond to racist incidents. When incidents have occurred previously, they have always been dealt with fairly and thoroughly, with parents being informed of the process. The flowchart will remind staff of steps to take and will reassure parents that we do not tolerate racism. The policy will be available on our website when it is completed. This will also be added to our induction for all staff.

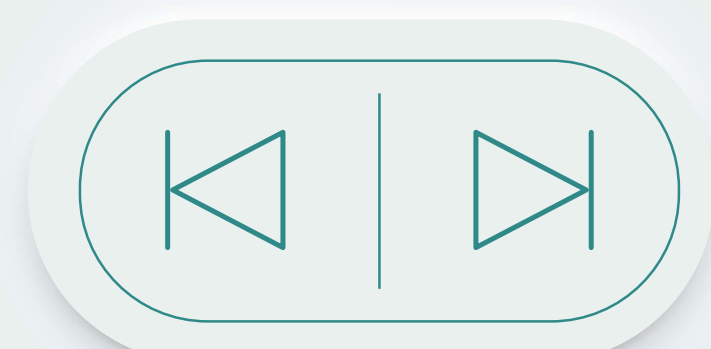
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We review our school website regularly to ensure that we meet all statutory requirements. In Seminar 1, Dr Michael Catchpool talked about exploring school websites as a potential member of staff. With this in mind, we intend to update the gallery of photographs on our website to reflect even further the diversity of our staff and pupils.

Questions we were asked to consider to share with all schools in the final seminar were:

- What are you most proud of since embarking on the Great Representation programme?
- What impact have you seen?

We feel that the curriculum and resources used in our school are now more diverse, and we continue to develop this. Staff have been enthusiastic about our journey and have been willing and open to try new ideas.

Children have responded positively to the wide range of resources and books that have been introduced. One example of this was observed during a learning walk. The Nursery class were reading a version of *Rapunzel* by Chloe Perkins, where all of the characters depicted in the pictures had Brown skin. All children in the class were engaged in the story. One pupil (with Brown skin) was observed stroking her own hair and later asked to take the book home. This request shows the impact that small changes can have on our pupils' sense of belonging.

We believe that our role as early educators is vitally important. We are in a privileged position to be able to educate and guide children towards a greater understanding of race equity.

*Melissa Peacock and Claire Bunyan*

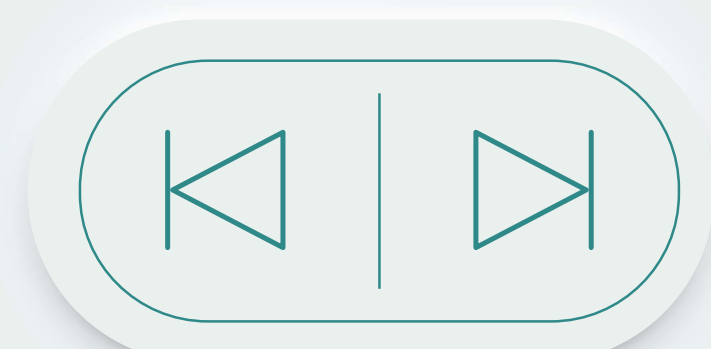
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# HOLLYBUSH PRIMARY SCHOOL

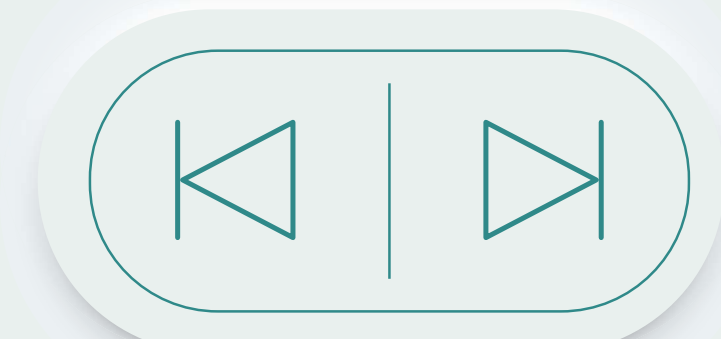
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## October 2023

We are a one-form-entry primary school in Hertford. Whilst we don't have large numbers of Black and minority ethnic pupils on roll, our community is more diverse than most of East Hertfordshire. At the time of writing, 86.8% of our students are recorded as White on the census.

Most of the children who attend the school are from the Sele Estate, which is the most deprived area of East Hertfordshire and within the highest 30% of deprived areas in the country. Children from minority ethnic groups and their parents report considerable racist tension within the local community. We have witnessed this on several occasions, for example when one parent referred to another as a "P\*\*\* bitch". A small number of children have left the school because of racist incidents that have happened in the community and at the school gates.

In school we have recorded an increased number of racist incidents since the COVID pandemic. We have invited police community support officers (PCSOs) into school to talk to individual perpetrators and have included anti-racist strategies within our equalities plan, but there is a small core of families whose beliefs and ideologies we have not been able to influence.

BAME (Black and minority ethnic) children report that they do not really feel that their cultures and backgrounds are represented in school. We have recently produced a core reading spine of books, which children must be exposed to in each year group; this includes a selection of books by BAME authors and with BAME characters. We have also incorporated learning about BAME artists, scientists and historical figures into our curriculum, but we recognise that this is just the start of our journey.

15% of our staff in total, and 18% of our teaching staff, are from BAME backgrounds. However, the senior leadership team (SLT) is entirely White British. At our first Great Representation meeting we reflected on this and also the fact that the diversity in our staffing is not clear on our website. The website is something we can address easily by using staff photos on our About Us pages. The identity of our SLT is more problematic, but we feel that encouraging more BAME staff to aspire to more senior roles (probably through the appraisal process), and being clear about this as an aim in our equalities plan, would be a good place to start.

## November 2023

Our first school visit was to Parmiter's School. As a hub group we received a very warm welcome, and as school leaders we discovered lots of common ground between us. The amount of work that the staff and – crucially – students at Parmiter's have done around race awareness and equality was, at once, very impressive and slightly overwhelming to see. Whilst leaders spoke humbly about their achievements, it was clear that a huge amount of work had been carried out, with tangible impact. Sixth form students spoke about how this aspect of the school's work had been transformative and that the curriculum was unrecognisable from when they had started in Year 7.

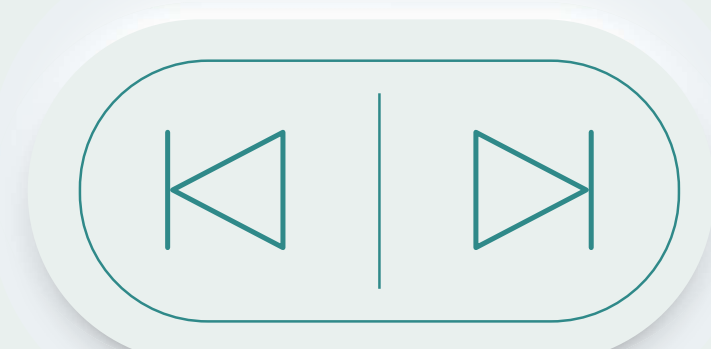
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The context of Parmiter's is very different to that of Hollybush. In addition to the age difference, their cohort is relatively better off economically; and the academic starting points of the students are, on the whole, higher. There is a much higher percentage of BAME students at Parmiter's than at Hollybush. On first sight, the schools appeared incomparable. The biggest challenge of the visit was to identify ways in which we are similar and, therefore, ways we could learn with and from each other.

One of the most striking things that appeared to permeate Parmiter's was the independence of the students; their ownership of their learning, behaviour and experience; and the extent to which they were listened to by staff and trusted to lead. Our school vision centres on children being independent leaders of their own learning and behaviour, as shown by the following, taken from our website:

All members of the school community will be leaders. We will lead our own behaviour, learning and relationships. We will be trustworthy. We will support others to be the best they can be, and we will be proud of our joint achievements.

In walking around Parmiter's, we saw a school that has realised our vision far better than we have realised it ourselves. We reflected that our children are not given enough opportunities to voice their opinions or plan for strategic improvement and – most importantly – that they do not have a platform from which to bring about real change, despite this being one of our key aims. This is definitely something that needs to change.

### December 2023

This month we spoke to staff about our work on the Great Representation programme. We shared some statistics from our first seminar, and staff were shocked by the clear difference between the life chances for Black people and White people in Britain. We also shared some of the stories told by Sufian Sadiq, director of the Chiltern Teaching School, in our second seminar. Sufian told us that following a meal at an educational conference at which he was a guest, two other guests thanked him for the delicious meal, assuming he was a member of the catering staff. He also told us that his young daughter had asked him how she could change her skin to be White; she pointed to her hand and said "Daddy, I don't like this". Staff recounted times when children at Hollybush, as young as those in Year 1, have made similar comments. We felt that there was a genuine commitment from staff, following this meeting, for Hollybush to become an overtly anti-racist school.

One of our teachers, who is of mixed English and Indian heritage, asked the question: "Do I count as BAME?" We said that, statistically, yes he does, and we went on to ask how he saw his ethnicity. He talked at length about his experiences within and outside school, which, fortunately, have been overwhelmingly positive. He said he feels he has received appropriate support to develop his career and that he feels a strong sense of belonging at school. This was lovely to hear but was only one person's feedback. He shared that this was the first time he could ever remember having been asked about his racial and cultural identity. He said that the fact he had never been asked before didn't bother him because he felt he could have spoken about it had he felt a need to, but that he did welcome being asked.

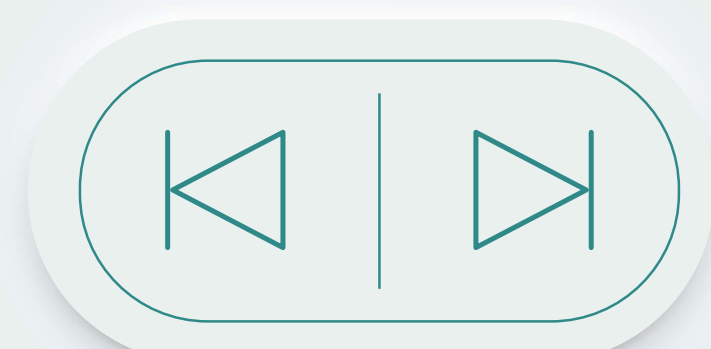
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Our conversations in the staff meeting illustrated just how little we know about our community and the experiences of those in it. As a result, we have created an action to survey our BAME children, staff and parents.

The questions we intend to ask the children are:

1. Can you remember a time at school when you learnt about someone who looks/ speaks/ lives like you?
2. Do you feel like you belong at Hollybush?
3. Do you think the adults in school understand your race/culture?
4. Have you experienced racism at school? What happened?
5. Do you think the adults in school understand what racism is? What do you think it is?
6. Who would you speak to if you felt that you were a victim of racism at school?
7. Do you feel confident sharing your background and culture with others in your class?

As well as sharing with staff, we have spoken to governors about our work. As a result, during a recent learning walk, governors spoke to some children about their experiences of race at Hollybush. One Ugandan child spoke to our Chair of Governors about racism he has experienced at school as well as in the wider community. When governors had left, I heard him say to a friend, "I liked talking to that man. I finally got a few things off my chest." This demonstrates that the children really do need a safe space to talk about their experiences and how they are feeling.

We have also invited all parents and staff to be part of a working group to create an action plan for the school to become anti-racist. So far, only two parents have expressed an interest, but it is early days, and we are sure that more will get involved as time goes on.

Also this month we welcomed staff from Oaklands and Wood End primary schools and Parmiter's on a visit to Hollybush. Our visitors had a tour of the school and commented on how our environment feels welcoming and homely; and features lots of images of children's families and homes, which give a sense of belonging. They also met some of our subject leaders, who were keen to talk about how they had woven learning about non-White British writers and artists through the curriculum.

### January 2024

We began this term with a visit from the charity organisation, Show Racism the Red Card. Two members of their team led workshops with our Key Stage 2 children. It was reassuring to see how much the children knew about racism and that they were aware it is not OK to judge someone based on their skin colour, religion or heritage. We have one child in school of mixed Black Caribbean and White British heritage, who is a selective mute. Her mother, who is White, has expressed concern that she is unable to educate her about the Black part of her heritage; her father lives in Jamaica and does not see his daughter often. During the workshop children were asked about their favourite foods and, whilst we couldn't hear her answer, we are sure that this child whispered a response. This was the first time anyone had heard her speak in

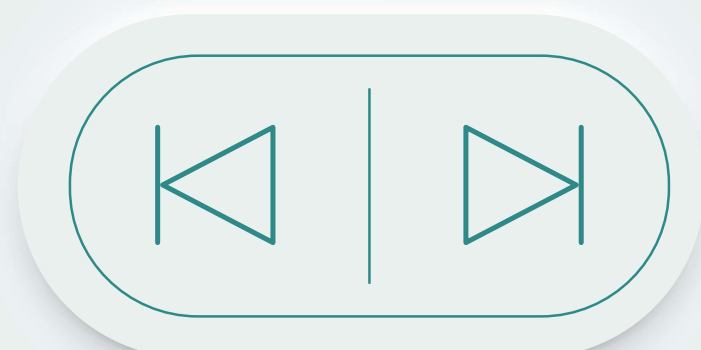
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school and was testament to the power of the workshop and her seeing herself and her experiences represented in our visitors.

Unfortunately, we had two racist incidents this month, which was really disappointing. Both involved children using offensive racist language directed at another child. We have not always used suspension in response to racist incidents, because sometimes we have felt that children have repeated language they have heard without fully understanding its implications. On these occasions, however, we felt certain that the children did know the implications of what they were saying, so both children were suspended for the following day. The victim of the second racist incident in particular was very upset and shaken by it. He is a confident Year 5 child, who is popular with his peers and highly independent. However, following this incident, he asked us to call his mother to collect him rather than him making his own way home, as he usually would. Everyone involved, including the parent of the perpetrator, was very distressed by this. In response, we are rewriting aspects of our behaviour policy to take a harder, more consistent line against racism and to be unambiguous in our stand that it is unacceptable.

### February 2023

This month we held a meeting for parents to discuss their experiences of race in the school. The meeting was open to all parents, regardless of ethnicity. However, despite much publication and phone calls to individuals, only two parents attended. Both parents spoke openly about their own experiences of racism while they were growing up in the UK and abroad. Both also said that they and their families experience racism on a regular basis in the local and wider town communities. However, they were clear that neither they nor their children had experienced racism at school.

These parents said that they were not aware of any racist incidents that had happened in school in recent years. We confirmed that there haven't been many, but there have been some. The parents suggested that we could tell stakeholders when a racist incident occurs so that they can band together and help us by coming together as a community. We can see there may be some benefits to this, but at the same time, we are not sure how to go about it positively and constructively rather than in a way that paints an unrealistically negative picture of the school or unhelpfully spotlights the perpetrator.

We told the parents that we are keen to hear the voices of the children but that, on the whole, they are very loyal to us as senior leaders and to the school as a whole and tend to tell us what they think we want to hear. We asked the parents if they would conduct pupil voice interviews for us, and they happily agreed.

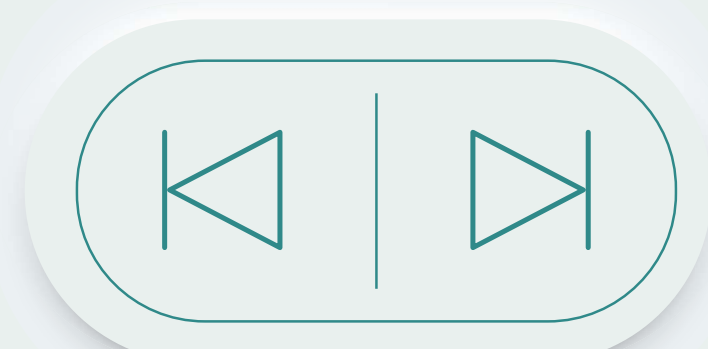
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March 2023

In March our parent volunteers spoke to some of our Key Stage 2 children, asking about their experiences of race in school. The outcomes were as follows:

Question No	Answer		
	Yes	No	Sometimes
Can you remember a time at school when you learnt about someone who looks/speaks/lives like you?	20%	80%	
Do you feel like you belong at Hollybush?	80%	20%	
Do you think the adults in school understand your race/culture?	87%	6.5%	6.5%
Have you experienced racism at school?	27%	73%	

**What happened?**

All the children who said they had experienced racism referred to the use of offensive language, either directed at them or in their presence. None of these children knew what had happened as a consequence, although all but one felt that it had been dealt with properly by the adults.

Do you think the adults in school understand what racism is?	100%	-	-
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**What do you think it is?**

The children described racism as:

- “The colour of people’s skin, when people are horrible about it.” Year 4
- “An act of disrespect or misunderstanding towards a group of people in society.” Year 6
- “Racism is judging people for their skin colour and calling them names.” Year 5
- “There are lots of stereotypes.” Year 4
- “Racism is ignorance.” Year 4
- “Saying ‘You’re Black. You don’t belong with us, you’re different.’” Year 4

Who would you speak to if you felt that you were a victim of racism at school?

– Identified an adult at school: 80%; Identified an adult at home: 20%

Do you feel confident sharing your background and culture with others in your class?	93%	7%	-
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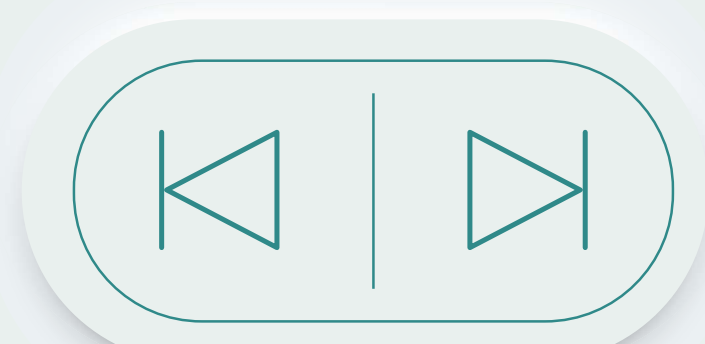
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We have been thinking carefully about the next steps of our journey. We are currently creating a document for our Early Years and KS1 children to gather their views on race and representation within school. We would also like to create a questionnaire for staff and parents. Many of our children mentioned that they would like to find a way to celebrate their cultures with the school community, so we are planning a special day where we will share food, stories and traditions from around the world, looking specifically at the countries our children represent. Next term we have another working group meeting planned. We hope to have more parents join us this time, and we have children who would like to join. Together, we aim to create a policy and action plan.

Being a part of the Great Representation programme has been an incredible learning experience for us; we have been inspired by great speakers and started a drive for change within our school. We don't want our school to just not be racist; we want it to be anti-racist – a school that challenges, with leaders who listen and leaders who are committed to never giving up for the children who need us the most.

*Hannah Cracknell and Valerie Noon*

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# THE HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

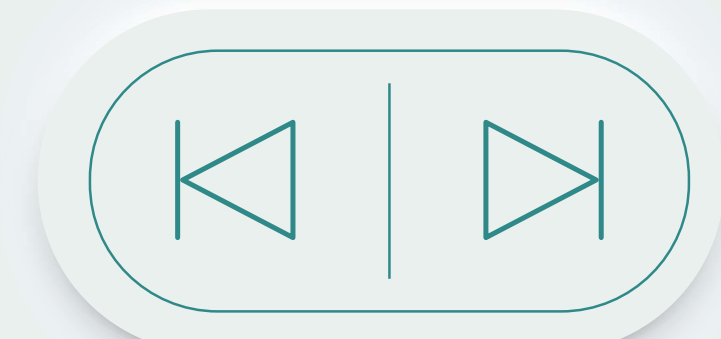
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## September 2023

The Holy Family Catholic Primary School is a one-form-entry school set in large grounds on the outskirts of Welwyn Garden City. We are an increasingly diverse community, with 15% of pupils speaking English as an additional language and 14 languages spoken across the school. 13 ethnic groups are represented, with 42% of pupils identifying as coming from a non-White British background. Significantly represented are pupils from other White backgrounds (14%) and Black, Black British or African (9%.) Despite ours being a Catholic school, there is increasing diversity in our pupils' religious backgrounds, with 32% of pupils coming from a non-Catholic background. Since COVID, more of our pupils are economically disadvantaged, with the percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding rising from 15% to 26% within two years.

Our pupils identify strongly with our school name, Holy Family. They consider themselves to be part of a larger family – our school community – and are rightly proud of this. Our school mission is *As a family we live, love, learn and celebrate with Jesus*. Our pupil chosen school values are:

- Family
- Trust
- Acceptance
- Honesty
- Sharing

Many of our pupils identify family as the most important value for them. One pupil expressed this as: “We are one big family with our shared values.”

We like to think that we are a welcoming and inclusive school. However, we wanted to know whether all our families truly felt part of our school community, celebrated and represented.

In September 2022 our school embarked on working to achieve the HFL Education Wellbeing Quality Mark. Mental health and wellbeing has been an area of focus for the school for some time, and we felt we could make good progress towards achieving the quality mark across the academic year. This focused our thinking on how we could incorporate equity, diversity and inclusion. From this came our “Do I See Myself?” project.

We started with the books in our school, asking our pupils if they saw themselves and felt represented in the books in our school and class libraries. Sadly, the feedback was that they did not. Therefore, with pupil input, we invested in a wide range of books to represent our unique school community. Before being added to our school library, the books were displayed for all, with each class having the opportunity to sample the new books for a day. This was a big hit, and we wanted to do more.

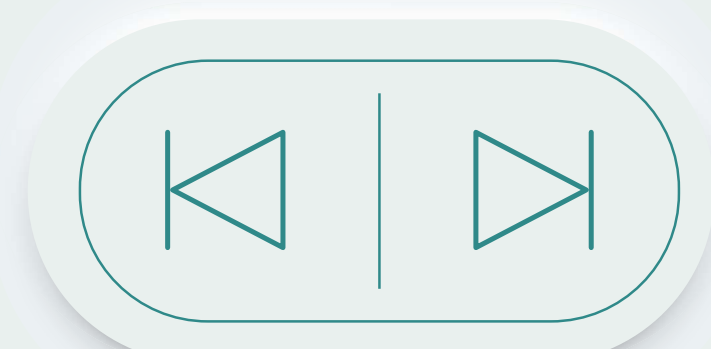
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Working towards the quality mark involves the completion of a wellbeing project, and we wanted the focus to be a celebration of heritage across our school community. The school wellbeing leader organised working parties of staff, parents and pupils to find out how they felt our school community and heritage could be celebrated. The work around this culminated in each member of the school family – pupils and staff members alike – creating a heritage board, which was a celebration of their heritage. We then held a special event at the end of the summer term, where we displayed all 152 boards in our school hall and invited the school community to see them. It was a wonderful event, with overwhelmingly positive pupil reflections, including:

“I found out lots of things about other people; everyone in the school is so different.”

“I feel more understood.”

“We are a school with very different families.”

“It made me feel pretty special. I was happy and excited when I stepped back and looked at my board.”

Our school community was buzzing with discussion about our diverse heritages, and we wanted to build on this enthusiasm and continue our work on equity, diversity and inclusion. We applied to be part of the Great Representation programme and wrote part of our school development plan around this.

### October 2023

Just prior to the first Great Representation seminar, our school staff joined with four other schools for a twilight event on diversity. The guest speaker was Aisha Thomas, founder of Representation Matters Ltd. The title of the event was “Becoming an Anti-racist School”. We had expected Aisha to talk about curriculum and other school-related subjects, but instead she asked some very challenging questions of us. She spoke passionately and directly about racism, unconscious bias and representation. It was very thought-provoking and in turn gave increased momentum to what we were trying to achieve.

During the first seminar we were addressed by Professor Paul Miller. Much of what he was saying resonated with the messages from Aisha Thomas. Research presented by both Paul Miller and Aisha Thomas indicates that racism very much exists in the British education system, and we had to ask ourselves:

*What are we going to do about it to have even a small impact in our one-form-entry school on the outskirts of Welwyn Garden City?*

*How are we going to ensure that our pupils feel seen and heard and belong?*

Big questions. As Cynthia Rowe, headteacher of How Wood Primary School, said later in the day, we are going to have to be brave.

We reflected on this as a staff. As we looked at ourselves, it was startlingly apparent that our staff body does not represent our school community. We are an almost completely female staff, with one male teaching assistant and one male site manager. We are almost 100% White. How can our pupils see themselves?

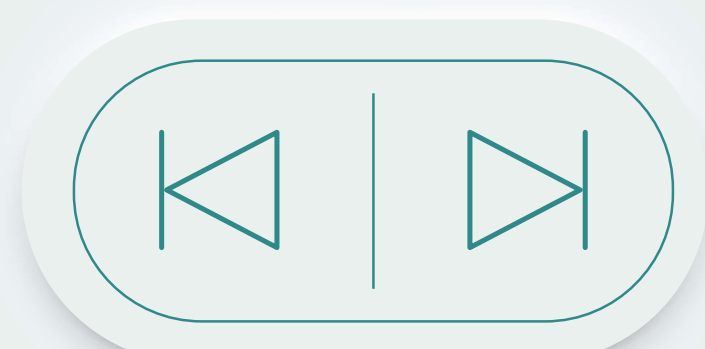
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At this early stage in the programme, there are many more questions than answers, and our priorities will inevitably evolve over time. Currently, our body of work and main focuses will be:

- Further consider diversity in our curriculum. How can the curriculum make more powerful links with the heritage and experiences of our pupils?
- Consider how we can ensure all members and potential members of the school community feel they are welcome and that there is a place for them at our school.
- Consider recruitment. How does our advertising and website reflect and encourage diversity?
- Develop an anti-racism policy. How are we demonstrating an anti-racist ethos, through our policies and practices, to all members of the school community?
- Consider staff confidence in the use of language around racism and diversity. Is there an agreed vocabulary when facilitating discussions with pupils?
- Develop pupil oracy. Through the Voice 21 whole-school oracy initiative, consider how to develop pupil oracy to enable our pupils to have a voice and express who they are and their heritage with pride and confidence.

### November 2023

Since the last seminar, we have worked on the areas we were considering in our October reflections and discussed ways to move towards our ultimate aim of ensuring all members of our school community feel that they are seen and heard and belong.

Our first consideration has been whether our curriculum design supports our anti-racist approach. We have made significant steps to ensure that we have included more diversity in the range of texts we provide in the school library, in classrooms, and as key texts for teaching. This has included studying whole-school texts such as *Coming to England* by Dame Floella Benjamin. We made a decision as a school some time ago not to hold a Black History Month event, as we felt this was tokenistic and that Black history should instead be taught across the curriculum in each year group throughout the year. We now need to ensure we have a diverse coverage of history that reflects the pupils and families at our school. Are powerful links being made between Black history and the rest of the curriculum, through English, art and RE, for example?

We have planned to redevelop our school library, with input from our pupils, and will consider how we group books and genres. One such consideration is whether our pupils would like a “Do I See Myself?” section, where there will be books representative of our school community. In addition, whether our weekly *must-read* recommendations include books that are inclusive and diverse.

As a Catholic school, we want to consider how our pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of other faiths. This is currently achieved by dedicating a week each term to the study of other faiths. An important consideration will be teachers’ own confidence and use of language when teaching about different faiths and cultures.

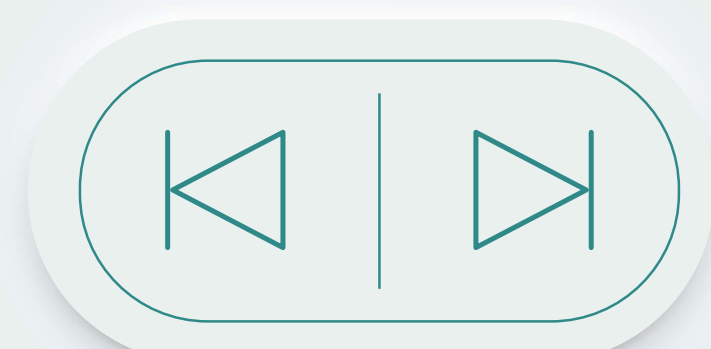
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Another consideration is how welcoming we are to potential staff members. After listening to Dr Michael Catchpool and his thoughts on inclusivity of recruitment, would our school be appealing for people from BAME backgrounds, and would they feel welcomed? We have made good progress in this area and have recently recruited a new member of staff of colour. This was achieved very simply, by reaching out to our school community rather than just posting generic adverts on recruitment websites. We hope to continue to build on this in the future.

We are working on implementing an anti-racism policy and supporting our staff to be able to talk confidently about racism and diversity with our pupils. We have accessed supporting resources from the Westminster Diocese Education Service and the work they are doing around racial justice, equity and diversity (RJED). This work will continue next term.

We are now working on our pupil voice activity and oracy. Our two oracy champions are beginning their work, with a focus on identifying strengths in pupil oracy and areas to improve. In Year 1 the teacher is linking exploratory talk to *belonging* and will ask the pupils to simply tell each other about themselves; whilst in Year 4 there will be more of a focus on presentation skills, which will link to the question *Why is it so important to talk about our heritage?*

It is also important for us to gain a sense of how our pupils feel about their sense of belonging in less formal ways. Over some biscuits and juice, we asked a selection of Key Stage 2 pupils:

- if they felt they belonged in our school
- what helps them to feel a sense of belonging
- how can we further support our pupils to develop a feeling of belonging

Our pupils indicated they did feel a sense of belonging and felt that they mattered to others at our school. They said that people are kind, the teachers help and encourage them, they see people like themselves in school (e.g. Black, Polish), and that they are welcomed into school each morning on the gate by senior leaders and by their teachers at the classroom door.

What follows describes a spontaneous conversation about heritage and belonging that took place between one of our Reception pupils and an Early Years teaching and learning adviser (EYTLA). For context: the adviser had not previously met the child. She later shared her conversation with the headteacher:

Zikam was keen to share his drawings with me. He told me he was from Nigeria, and he had a Nigerian sister in Nursery and a brother in Year 1. They are not his biological siblings but go to his “special church”, where they eat and celebrate together. He explained that of course he had visited Nigeria, as this was his home! It really was a delightful conversation.

We will now focus time with our EYTLA to look at diversity and inclusion in our Early Years.

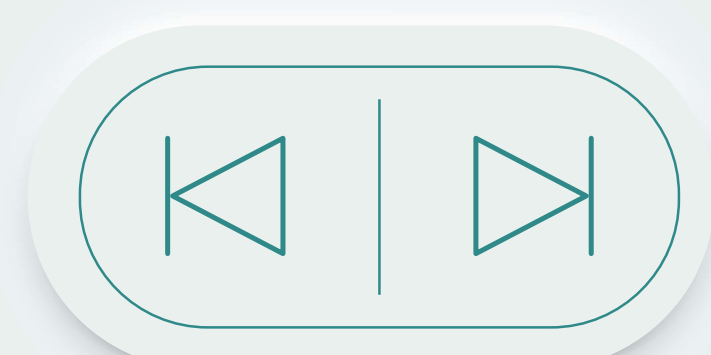
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The second Great Representation seminar was hard-hitting, particularly the emotive, raw and honest presentation from Sufian Sadiq, in which he reflected very personally on the current conflict in the Middle East and the fact that we were not talking about it enough. From listening to Sufian's personal experiences and those of his family, we realised that we truly do not know what it is like to walk in the shoes of Black or Brown people.

Claire Stewart-Hall spoke passionately about institutional racism in schools and asked what we can do about it. She used the Stephen Lawrence case to emphasise that we cannot rely on policy, and she encouraged us to learn how to talk about race. Shammi Rahman re-emphasised this when she said that silence has not protected her or kept her safe. She spoke of the importance of speaking out rather than staying silent when you witness or are a victim of racism.

We considered how to respond to the strong messages the speakers had given us. Our pupils are well aware of the current conflict in the Middle East. It is important that we respond to this and discuss it openly, particularly in the context of the deaths of many children due to this conflict. We acknowledged that staff might feel unsure or uncomfortable about addressing this highly emotional and political debate.

As a Catholic school, it is for us to consider how to respond to the current conflicts in relation to our Catholic ethos and beliefs. Are we living out the belief that we should love our neighbour? We discussed the issue with staff and agreed that the issue should be discussed in whole-school assembly, and that we would focus on praying for peace in the Middle East. Every week we pray for "the world to be filled with doves of peace". The headteacher also wrote a focus piece on the conflict in the school newsletter, asking the wider school community to pray for peace.

Our current key message is *Let's talk*. Let us talk about issues that can be uncomfortable to discuss such as conflict and racism. We have a relatively small number of racist incidents reported by pupils and staff at our school. This has led us to reflect on whether our pupils always report incidents of racism, or whether instead they tolerate comments or incidents because that is what they have learnt to do. As a leadership team, we need to ensure equity and justice for all of our children so that no child is discriminated against. An important part of this will be giving children a voice so that they feel represented, and that they are given every opportunity to affect decisions that are made at our school.

### December 2023/January 2024

In December we hosted a visit from the other schools in our hub. Our visitors had a tour of the school and spoke with our two ECTs (early career teachers) about their experiences of inclusion at our school. It was positive to hear about how much they had both enjoyed teaching a unit of writing based on Dame Floella Benjamin's *Coming to England*. One of our ECTs, in her second year, also shared that our celebration of heritage work at the end of last academic year had been the highlight of her first year as a teacher. Our visitors then spoke to some of our Key Stage 2

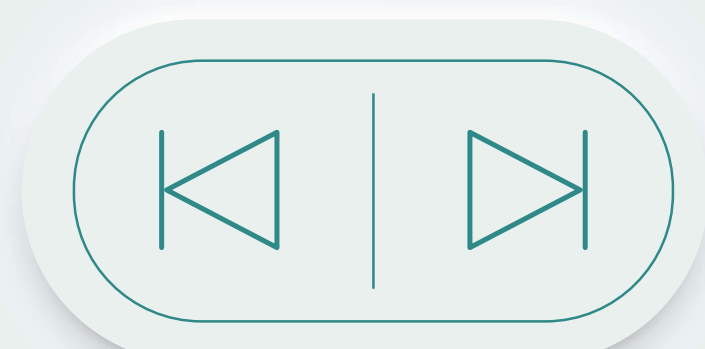
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pupils from a range of diverse backgrounds, representative of our school community. The focus of this pupil voice was belonging. Pupil comments included:

“Teachers listen to us. They greet us on the gate and at the classroom door each morning.”

“There are others that look like me at our school, which makes me feel like I belong.”

“We all follow Jesus. We are all treated equally at this school.”

“In Coming to England Floella moved from Trinidad, and the other children were not kind to her because of the colour of her skin. We have a new girl in our class; we welcomed her and played with her.”

“We all wear the same uniform so we look the same. I like this.”

Each year at Christmas, each class works to create a piece of artwork depicting the nativity scene. Staff and pupils choose a piece of artwork from a country that is of relevance to them, learn about the artist and country, and then recreate the piece of art for a whole-school display. This year there was representation from India, Romania, the Philippines, Poland, Nigeria, Lithuania and Ethiopia. This prominent whole-school display enabled our pupils and their families to see themselves and learn about their heritage.

At the end of the autumn term, we held a staff meeting to update the wider staff on our learning and actions so far through the programme. We shared the main messages from the speakers and discussed our journey over the past 12 months and our aims going forward. The first point arising from our discussions was that staff felt they needed more training around the language of diversity and “saying the right thing”, which meant some were shying away from having more challenging conversations around race. We drew comparisons to when non-Catholic teachers, of which we have many, were teaching RE and worried about saying the wrong thing or getting it wrong. We have worked hard to build up staff confidence in the language of religion and will now aim to do the same around the language of race.

The second point was that we need to ensure, further, that we have a representative and diverse curriculum. We have invested in buying books that are more inclusive and celebrate diversity but, as was evident from a recent visit from our HFL Education English teaching and learning adviser, our school library stock was out of date and in need of a revamp! We have now cleared out books from as far back as 1987 and ensured that all remaining books represent families, heritage and the times we live in, and are grouped in genres that are easily accessible to pupils.

After hearing Bennie Kara speak at the last seminar, we discussed how we could create an inclusive classroom with small tweaks and by linking this to our work on oracy. We must be conscious of the language used in class and across school, who we select for certain tasks, who talks the most in class and who is missing from the discussion, and ensure that we do not unconsciously reinforce stereotypes. During our INSET at the beginning of this term, we were working with an HFL Education adviser, who impressed on us the importance of *windows* and *mirrors* in our curriculum: windows to see more and learn more; and mirrors as a reflection, learning about our heritage and ourselves. We have realised that ensuring our curriculum is diverse and inclusive is a process and not just a task.

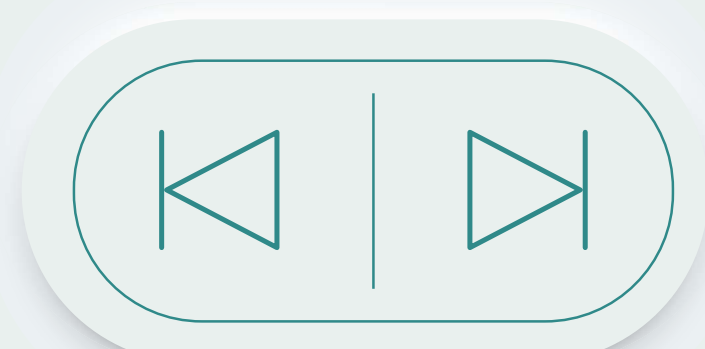
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Since returning to school last week, we have been conscious to continue with our message of peace, in light of Sufian Sadiq's presentation and the growing international conflict. Continuing our theme to "Fill the World with Doves of Peace", each child has written on a dove cut-out how they would do this, and we have created a whole-school display to represent their thoughts for our school community to read. Some examples of the pupils' thoughts are:

"Saying thank you and being thankful for what you have"

"We can fill the world with doves of peace by treating people how we want to be treated, so if you want someone to listen, you listen to them first."

"We can fill the world with doves of peace by accepting others and treating people with respect."

28 January is Racial Justice Sunday in the Catholic Church. The theme for this year is *Seeing one another in the life of the Church*. The theme's aim is to continue to encourage people to see themselves, their race and their culture in the Church's life, with a focus on saints and representation through the saints, as there are many saints from many different countries across the world. We did some work on this a couple of years ago, as our four house saints were mostly White, European and male. The pupil house captains at the time researched saints they felt were representative of our school community and drew up a shortlist. They presented information about the saints to the rest of the school in assemblies, and then pupils voted via the school council to choose our new house saints. We now have saints representing our Black and Polish pupils, and males and females are represented equally. As part of our work for Racial Justice Sunday, our pupils will revisit our house saints to discuss and learn about why they were chosen by our past pupils to represent them. This work will be displayed in school and shared with the Diocese of Westminster.

Six months into this programme, we feel we are making progress towards our aims and must continue the momentum to the end of the academic year and beyond.

## February 2024

Following on from the seminar in January, we have seen our focus to shift to two of the priorities we identified earlier in the programme:

- Develop an anti-racism policy. How are we demonstrating an anti-racist ethos, through our policies and practices, to all members of the school community?
- Consider staff confidence in the use of language around racism and diversity. Is there an agreed vocabulary when facilitating discussions with pupils?

During Seminar 4 we were introduced by Professor David Gillborn to the concept of critical race theory and the idea that race is not a biological or natural feature but a social construct. It has been interesting to consider that these social constructs could be used to oppress or exploit people of colour and create social and economic differences between White and non-White people. This emphasises the importance of careful analysis of school data and comparing the progress and attainment of pupils from different ethnicities.

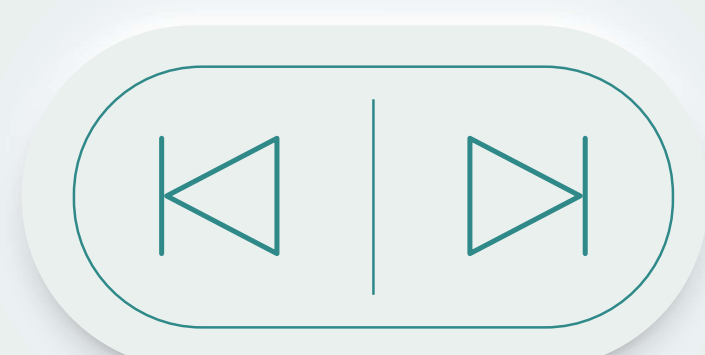
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Through of analysis of internal school data, it has become apparent that our disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well in the core curriculum subjects as our non-disadvantaged pupils. In addition to this, 35% of our disadvantaged pupils are from BAME backgrounds. Data can be the catalyst for many positive changes within a school, and we must continue to unpick and discuss our data to ensure actions taken as a result give advantage to our disadvantaged pupils, and particularly to those pupils who are disadvantaged and from BAME backgrounds.

Discussions in our hub group made us further consider how we collect the views of different groups of pupils in our school community. We mostly ensure that pupil voice is carried out with a carefully mixed group. However, sometimes to speak to a group of Black pupils together, particularly underachieving Black boys, might empower them to be more open about their feelings and experiences.

Toks Olusamokun's session on addressing incidents of racism in our schools reminded us that, even with a robust policy in place, if staff do not have the awareness of and the confidence to deal appropriately with racist incidents, the policy is not worth the paper it is written on. This returns us to Claire Stewart-Hall's idea that we cannot rely solely on policy and should learn how to talk about race. Staff training to equip colleagues with the confidence and language to themselves tackle racist incidents as they happen will be a focus for the summer term.

### March 2024

The seminar at the end of February encouraged us to look at representation, diversity and inclusion from a perspective different to that of the previous seminars, with a presentation from Ruth-Anne Lenga on "Addressing Antisemitism". This was an especially timely and pertinent presentation, given the conflict in the Middle East and what we had previously heard from Sufian Sadiq. With religion being a protected characteristic, it is widely known that many people of different religions have suffered persecution throughout history, but it would seem none more so than the Jews.

The daily experiences of antisemitism were shocking to hear, particularly when one colleague shared that they would not travel to France for fear of their safety due to antisemitism. As leaders of a faith school, this led us to reflect on our own religious character and almost breathe a sigh of relief that we did not find ourselves in the same situation of worry and fear due to our religion. It also emphasised to us the importance of teaching our pupils about all world religions that share so many common beliefs, the main ones being love and peace.

We also heard from Penny Rabiger about how to create an anti-racist school – a goal that everyone taking part in this programme must share. Her presentation pulled together many of the strands we have been considering throughout this journey. It also offered practical advice on how we can:

- reflect and audit our school to see whether it is an anti-racist institution
- recognise how far along the journey we are to achieving this goal

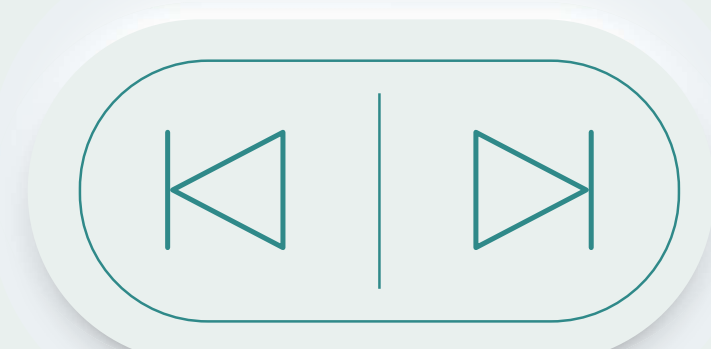
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Penny spoke too of the hidden curriculum, which has informed our planning for the summer term, when we will review our curriculum plans to ensure there are more diverse cultural references.

This month we also had our final school visit as a hub to Harpenden Academy. As we gathered together and reflected, it was clear that the relationships, trust and support between us have developed since we embarked on this experience together. We have asked probing questions; supported one another; and, most importantly, been open and honest about our schools – about us as school leaders and about the path that each of us continues on.

At Holy Family we started on this journey believing that we were an inclusive school that had begun to recognise the growing diversity of our small school community and all the richness this brings. We have been challenged to think more critically and to scratch beneath the surface. We have taken some comfort from the fact that the religious character of our school has enabled us to readily embrace many of our challenges. For example, we were able to tackle the controversy of war in the Middle East simply by collectively, and as a community, praying for peace. Our faith as a community offers our pupils a sense of belonging, whether they are Catholic, of other faiths or of none.

We will continue to strive for all our pupils to feel they belong and also that they are seen within our curriculum, within our displays, and within our staff body. We are planning an International Day in summer, where we will invite our families to come to school in traditional dress, listen to music, dance and share food, and we hope that if our pupils are not yet reflected in our staff, they will be able to see themselves in our school community.

Rebecca Woode, headteacher, spoke passionately about turning setbacks into progress. We have learned that racism is firmly embedded across society, so we must recognise that there may be setbacks and racist incidents in our journey ahead but that setbacks do not erase the progress we have made. Indeed, they should make us stand up for what we believe is right for our school community.

The journey continues ...

*Katie Linnane and Lisa Clifford*

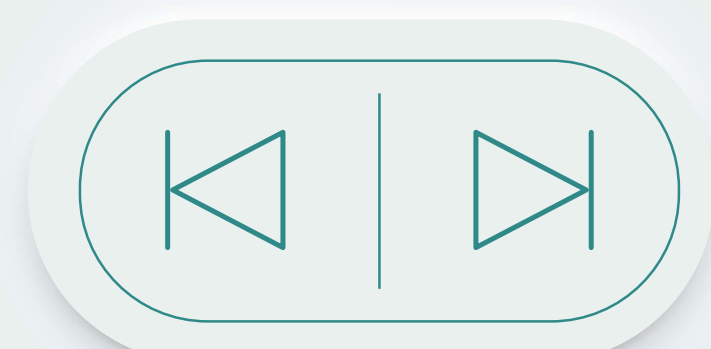
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# LEVENTHORPE SCHOOL

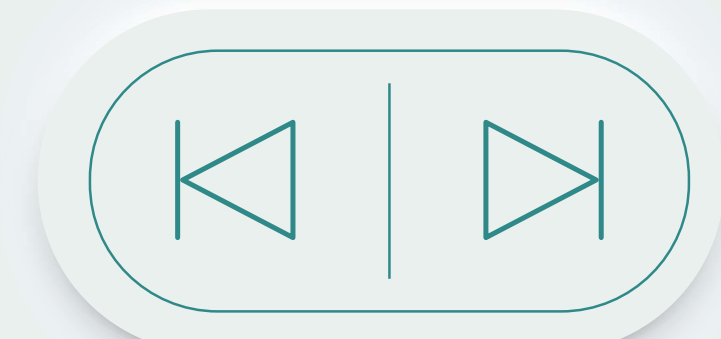
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## September 2023

As school leaders we can often be washed along with the tide of reacting to the challenges and situations that arise within our busy secondary school. We believe we are anti-racist, we believe our institution is anti-racist, and we consider ourselves to be in the correct moral position on this important issue. The opportunity to stop and reflect, and to hear from Professor Paul Miller and Cynthia Rowe in the first session of the Great Representation programme, presented us with a challenge that became ever clearer and more real as the day progressed. The issue of racism in our regulations, in society and in institutions affects the opportunities, outcomes and life chances of BAME individuals and groups. If we only react to incidents of racist behaviours or attitudes, we will only continue to affect what we have already been affecting. The need for proactive change to alter the status quo was the overriding message from the day.

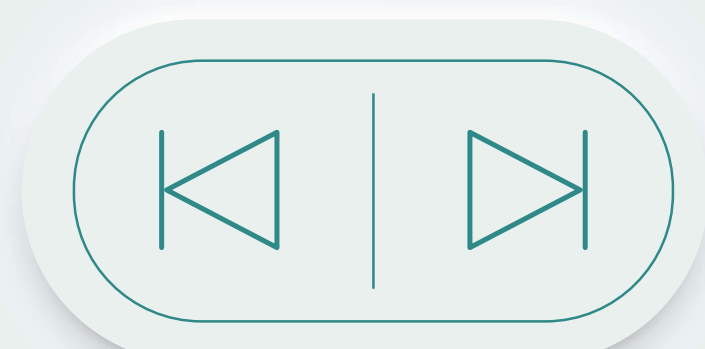
We have direct influence on our communities as educational leaders. Leventhorpe School is a community of more than 1,500 students, over 200 staff, and our parent body. Within our predominantly White community we have an opportunity to go beyond the challenge of the reactive conversations and actions associated with any racist incidents and our current curriculum coverage. We can work towards a far more proactive approach, where the curriculum, the staff body, the systems and routines support and promote an awareness of cultural difference. We can move beyond tolerance to stoke the passion for wider societal change, to ensure that future generations of BAME individuals do not face the barriers of current and previous generations.

The imperative for radical and proactive change is clear, and the journey is daunting in terms of the work that is both possible and necessary. There are so many areas and issues that could be addressed and improved. One key leadership challenge is what to do first and how to have a clear plan for development.

Another issue is the need for courageous and bold leadership. It is often sensible in leadership to take the position of delegated autonomy. In so many areas, the school leaders are not the experts, and staff who are at the point of delivery – as those with the operational experience – will often be best placed to solve problems. In terms of the anti-racism agenda, sharing the issue to see what staff come up with and letting change bubble from bottom up will simply not work. Here is an issue where, if we want to effect change, it needs to be led from the top, with clear expectations around the need to change curriculum, systems and processes to ensure coherence and purpose.

The challenge here is that, as an all-White leadership team, we have no lived experience, and we are likely to make assumptions and mistakes in our journey. We do have students and parents we can ask to guide and support our leadership team as we engage with the challenge, and these voices and experiences will be crucial as we journey forward.

The first session left us with lots of questions but also a far clearer imperative for proactive change. It will be interesting to see how we turn this awareness and desire for change into action over the coming months.

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**November 2023**

One thing that has stuck with us since starting the Great Representation programme is the sense of privilege we feel in being part of the programme. We have often commented on how powerful it would be for all staff to have the opportunity to learn in the way we have done. With that not being an option, we are mindful that we have a duty to share what we have learned so that we can improve things for our staff, students and community.

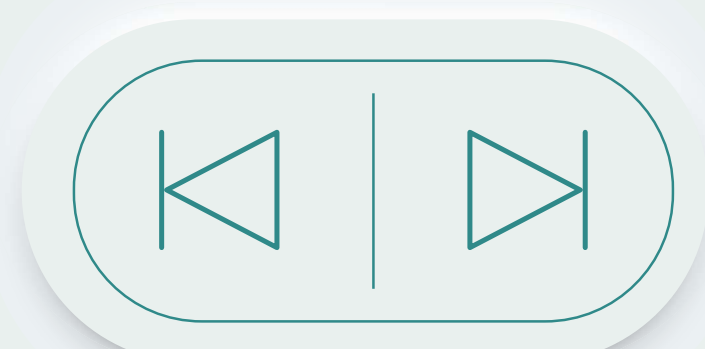
The presentation from Claire Stewart-Hall was both powerful and pragmatic. One of the things we have grappled with as a school is the clear lack of diversity we have in our learning community, and as a result, the reticence from some to engage in the race agenda. Claire's presentation reframed that narrative entirely, instilling in us the imperative to take decisive action in our own school settings.

For us, our work against racism is not because of our diverse demographic but in spite of it. We have a duty to educate and prepare students for a world that may not yet be their own. One of the most uncomfortable parts of the day was shining a light on our own lived reality and the way in which race has been represented over time in our culture, education system and upbringing. It was hard for our cohort to remember a time when diversity was addressed in our own school experience. It was even harder to admit that previous generations held a very different view of what was acceptable and unacceptable.

It was made clear that understanding our own positionality was an important part of the learning process. Exploring our own subjugated and privileged identities strengthened this even further, helping us to understand that our privilege is not something to be ashamed of but something to use as a force for cultural change. This presentation has helped us hugely as a school and has given us a clear understanding of how to articulate the rationale for change to our wider staff body.

At times it can be hard not to feel an imposter in the EDI conversations. How can we possibly understand what our colleagues are going through, as we cannot understand what it is like to walk in their shoes? That being said, Sufian Sadiq's emotive presentation spoke to many of us in so many different ways: as an educational colleague, a parent and a human being. Whilst it was so very hard to hear about his many professional and personal challenges, it was even harder to hear that the educational system we have been asked to put our trust in is letting Sufian down in many ways. It is no wonder that he may feel there is no point in continuing to fight and challenge.

The complexity of the situation was brought into sharp focus when we returned from Seminar 2 with a renewed confidence to not stay silent on the current world crisis in Gaza, which is affecting so many people. As a senior leadership team we grappled with the desire to say something to our community but also with the fear of saying something wrong. We are disappointed to say that we chose to stay silent, despite the courage of our convictions, because we couldn't reach a consensus on what would be acceptable to articulate. We wonder if we would have reached the same conclusion if every member of the senior leadership team had been brought to tears, as we had, by Sufian's articulation of his struggles.

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In the afternoon session, we were reminded again by Shammi Rahman's personal journey about the power and privilege we have in our roles as educators. To hear about her fight as a young person and her confidence as an adult was empowering, and it reminded us of the many young people we work with nowadays who demonstrate that same passionate commitment to change. The way in which Shammi was supported by so many people around her was brought into sharp focus, and this prompted us to reflect on the power of like-minded learning communities and individuals. That is one of the things that has been special about Great Representation so far. Although there was some jest about how close the different hub groups have become, it remains true that we have all built solid working relationships, in which we are able to discuss and challenge. It is rare to develop that trust so quickly!

In our own setting we continue to work with students and staff in understanding, reporting and challenging incidents of racism. We continue to struggle with the delicate tension between education and sanction, and recognise that one often goes hand in hand with the other. We have disseminated much of our teaching from the last seminar at a recent staff meeting, where three members of staff delivered a session entitled: "Building confidence in addressing issues of diversity – empowering individuals to challenge". We spoke about the issue of positionality and language, and the role of the active bystander. We are already seeing an increase in reported incidents, which in turn provides us with further opportunities to educate.

What remains clear is that, whilst a lot has changed, we still have such a long way to go.

### December 2023

It is very easy to feel that diversity, equity and inclusion sit mainly within the pastoral realm of school provision. For example, the discussions around these issues are most often managed through the PSHE curriculum, assemblies and form-time provision. Alongside this, when young people inevitably get things wrong, it is often pastoral leaders who challenge. Day 3 of the Great Representation programme taught us that change has to sit across all aspects of school provision, none being more important than the curriculum we teach.

We have started to engage curriculum leaders in conversation around this. For example, all curriculum leaders were asked to evaluate what they teach, using the HFL audit tool and, as a result, were asked to commit to three changes this academic year. These have all been included in the faculty development plans so that leaders are held accountable and so that we can evaluate change.

Bennie Kara's presentation, "Diversity in the Curriculum", helped us to understand this further and gave us practical suggestions as to how we may support our curriculum leaders. In particular, the concept of different curriculum thinking, and the demarcation of substantive and disciplinary knowledge, have helped us to guide teachers in evaluating what is being taught and helping them to engage students in questioning the knowledge. This will hopefully mean that, over time, we will develop more questioning learners who engage with the curriculum in a more critical way.

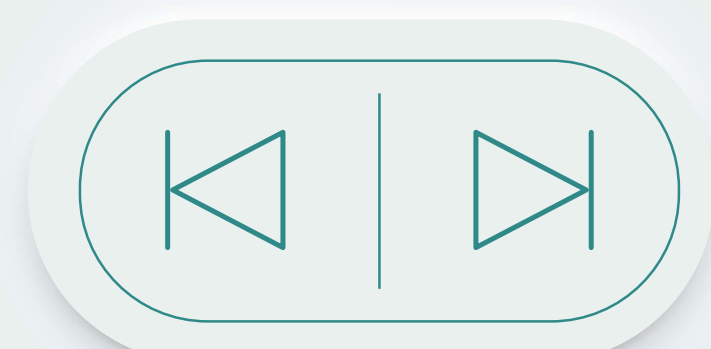
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Something that has remained a consistent message all the way through the programme – and has been brought into sharp focus in this session – is that we need to bring others with us more, making them more accountable for action. As senior leaders we are not always very good at letting go. However, we must become more intentional in leading others through the thinking we have been privy to, giving those people the opportunity to make valid and considered judgements for themselves.

Whilst we recognise the luxury of hearing some incredibly learned speakers, the practical application and real-life experiences of our school leaders is equally powerful. Over recent years we have talked a lot about the creation of safe spaces, and so the session from Seb Gray gave us an opportunity to learn from those who may be further along in our journey. The use of a staff forum is a really exciting suggestion, as a way of holding professional and productive conversations about challenging issues, and is something that we intend to invest time in. That being said, we are aware of the necessity to get the protocols right and the delicate balance in managing such important issues.

In terms of action planning from the last session, we have fed back to key members of staff, including pastoral leads and curriculum leads. We have also had the opportunity to deliver further sessions to staff, using learning from previous Great Representation seminars to deliver messages on positionality and use of language. We have seen a marked rise in the number of incidents that are being reported as a result, which – although disappointing in some ways – shows that staff are not letting concerns go unchecked. We are looking forward also to our Cultures Week at the end of the month, where we are celebrating the different cultures in our school and in the local community, to create more diverse conversations.

## January 2024

As educators we have long learnt to rely on data, to show us when things are working and when things are not working, and to guide us in understanding what we need to do as professionals to make things better. Professor David Gillborn's challenge during his session on "Racism and education" was for us to question the data – both nationally and in-house – to help us to see the hidden messages that may not initially be abundantly clear.

We were intrigued to hear about some of the discrepancies in the national statistics and the way that this may hide the truth of what is happening in our schools. This has encouraged us to be more questioning in our own approach. His highlighting of the way in which the national press may be manipulating the presentation of diversity concerns was both stark and worrying and has given us research to explore, which may help us to be more critical in our approach.

A comment that particularly struck us was the notion that students from ethnic minority groups may face danger at every decision-making point; without consideration, we may as educators be inadvertently preventing students from progressing because of the decisions we make. Whilst these decisions may be well intentioned, if we do not approach them through a diversity lens, we run the risk of creating a ceiling that is difficult to push through. We have been mindful of this in some of the conversations we have had in school this week around options subjects and future pathways, recognising that our words and actions can have a powerful effect on achievement in the future.

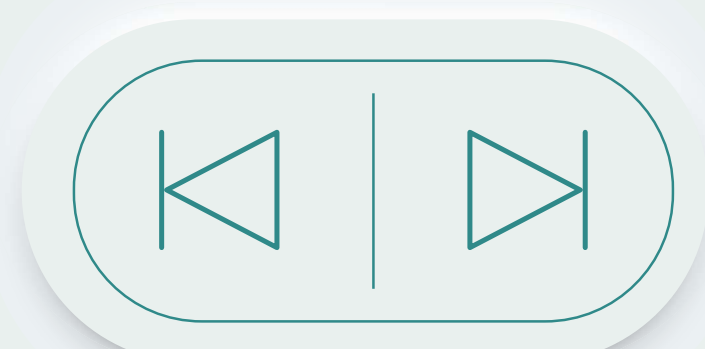
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We were intrigued to hear about some of the discrepancies in the national statistics and the way that this may hide the truth of what is happening in our schools. This has encouraged us to be more questioning in our own approach. His highlighting of the way in which the national press may be manipulating the presentation of diversity concerns was both stark and worrying and has given us research to explore, which may help us to be more critical in our approach.

A comment that particularly struck us was the notion that students from ethnic minority groups may face danger at every decision-making point; without consideration, we may as educators be inadvertently preventing students from progressing because of the decisions we make. Whilst these decisions may be well intentioned, if we do not approach them through a diversity lens, we run the risk of creating a ceiling that is difficult to push through. We have been mindful of this in some of the conversations we have had in school this week around options subjects and future pathways, recognising that our words and actions can have a powerful effect on achievement in the future.

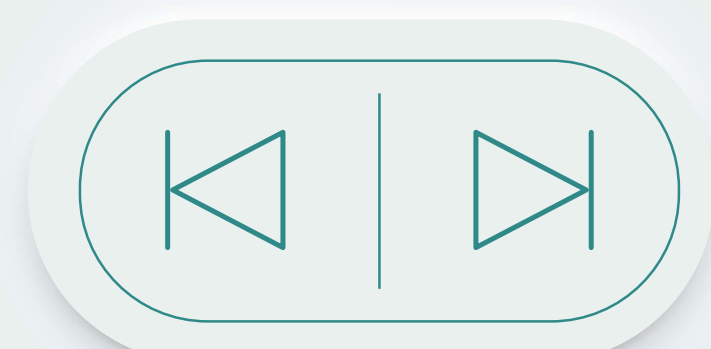
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At Leventhorpe this week we have been looking forward to celebrating Cultures Week – a step up from the historic International Languages Week, which has been part of the school calendar for some time. Led by the MFL department, Cultures Week is a celebration of student culture, with the intention of creating the feeling of belonging, which we have learnt through the Great Representation programme is so central to student wellbeing and performance. It has been very exciting to see the planning, but it has not been without its challenges.

One pertinent conversation has been around the presentation of Israel, which has brought into sharp focus some of the delicate issues within our school community. Whilst never easy to navigate, we have felt supported by the learning and guidance from our time as part of the Great Representation programme and have felt more confident in dealing with some very challenging conversations.

Having worked very briefly with Toks Olusamokun previously, we have been impressed by her knowledge and professionalism. What impressed us even more during Day 4 of the programme was her fierce determination and passion in the session she led on “Dealing with Racist Incidents in School”. Some of the comments that Toks made about issues in school were familiar to us, and it was extremely helpful to work through the school scenarios as a wider team – an exercise that we have taken back into school and into our pastoral team discussions.

The learning from the session was brought into sharp focus this week as we have dealt with a parent who has challenged our decisions around the racist actions of their son. It is disappointing to see that some of the things Toks mentioned in her session are still very live in our own school setting and wider community. But fundamentally, this is what makes the learning from the Great Representation programme so very necessary.

## February 2024

It never ceases to amaze us that the programme seems so very topical in its content. As we moved towards another face-to-face session, it is alarming that some of the issues we will discuss as a group are played out so clearly in the national arena. To some this may seem to be a coincidence, but it has become abundantly clear that it doesn't matter what time of the year the sessions and speakers are planned for, the concerns discussed as part of the programme remain pertinent and current. A sad indictment of our times, perhaps.

With antisemitism having such an unfortunate precedence in our world at the moment, it was challenging to hear from Ruth-Anne Lenga about her stories and experiences. We are familiar with the history of persecution of Jews, but to hear – and see – examples of current antisemitism in such abhorrent detail was challenging for us as school leaders and observers. Ruth's presentation prompted us as a hub group to explore a potential hierarchy of racism, leading us to the conclusion that the persecution of no one racial group is greater or more serious than another. Our primary concern should be about how we create a culture of acceptance for all. Ruth's practical advice on how to manage conversations with young people in school gave us the confidence and tools to challenge.

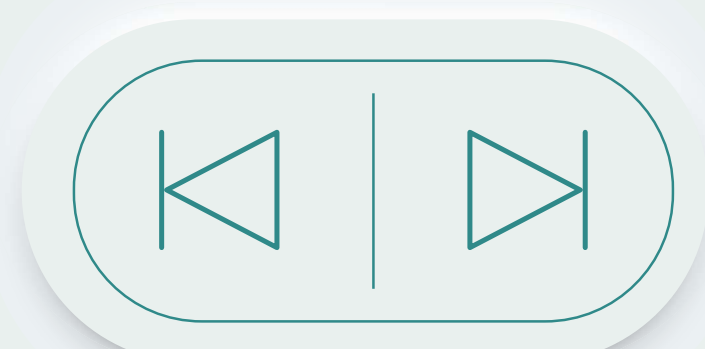
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One of the aspects of the Great Representation programme that has been of greatest value is the fact that we have been presented with some incredibly thorny and complex issues, but that these have often been coupled with practical advice as to how to lead a school to become more racially aware. In working through Penny Rabiger's research and understanding the journey of racial literacy through schools, we were able to see how the discussion has changed over time. Her talk gave us a clear understanding of what needs to be done in specific areas and with specific people. It has given us a practical framework to help us implement the next steps. Penny spoke about whether we had jumped or were pushed in our conversation and actions around race equity. We are ashamed to say that, for us, it was the latter. But in moving forwards, we want to control the narrative for the better.

### What are the next steps for Leventhorpe?

In looking back to where we started – and before the learning inherent in the programme – it is clear that we have made some strides in developing a stronger and more inclusive culture in our school. As leaders we are more confident in managing the necessary challenges and have been supported in a shared vocabulary to help us discuss topical and difficult issues. We can lay our hands on the data to support our work more readily, which is helping us to identify pockets of concern and to intervene with impact. We have developed far more rigorously the opportunities to delve into different cultures, celebrating not only what our school community is now but also what our school community may be in the future. We have given students a voice and are listening more intently to the feedback we have been given. We are more conscious of our responsibility to create a sense of belonging for all students.

It is also clear we have a long way to go. We are only skimming the surface of what we might achieve if we are willing to put our time, energy and expertise into such an important endeavour. Some of the areas we intend to investigate in the immediate future are:

- the way in which individual curriculum areas celebrate culture and heritage
- how we might use our school calendar of events to celebrate important events for our school community and broach an understanding of the wider cultural community
- how we can encourage staff to feel confident in their understanding of race-related language, so that they can challenge things that are not right
- how we can develop a greater student voice

We feel privileged to have had the opportunity to engage in such important conversations but recognise that we now need to have those conversations with others in our own setting, disseminating the information and learning that is going to create the impetus to change. The moral purpose and intention are apparent, but we need to carve out the time and the space – through policy and practice – for the lasting change that will make our school a richer and more dynamic place to learn.

*Layla Price and Malcolm White*

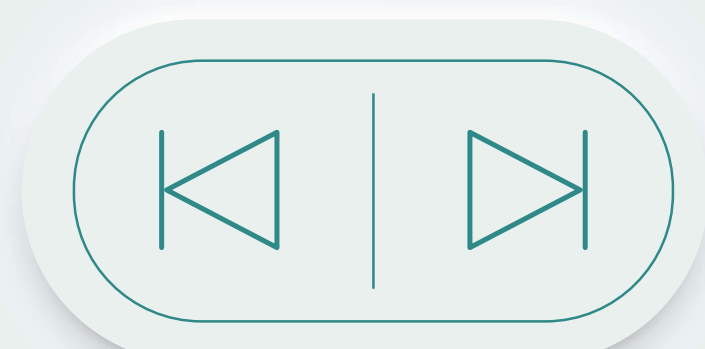
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# LEVERSTOCK GREEN CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

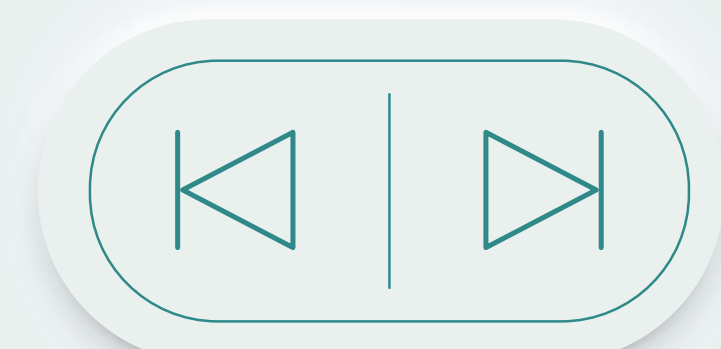
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## September 2023

Leverstock Green Church of England Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Hemel Hempstead, a few minutes from the M1. On the edge of farmland to one side, and with the third new housing estate being built in ten years close to the school, there is added pressure for places in the school. The school is oversubscribed every year.

As a Church of England School, our vision scripture is: “For you are all the children of God” (Galatians 3:26), with our core values being love, respect and forgiveness.

There are currently 242 children on roll. There are 20 languages represented, with 43 pupils with English as an additional language, 17 different ethnicities, and six religions represented (including Christianity). With 42 pupils receiving pupil premium or free school meals, we also have 44 children on the SEND register, including six with education health care plans (33% of which are not White British).

There are currently 31 staff members, of whom three are people of colour, four are White non-British, and the rest are White British. Seven staff members have hidden disabilities. There are 11 governors, two of whom are not White British.

Where are we on our diversity journey? We have mapped our curriculum to highlight opportunities to explore and specifically teach issues of diversity and equality, e.g. Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, Black history and World War II. The PSHE curriculum map highlights opportunities to teach about British values and protected characteristics. Each year we have termly enrichment weeks, e.g. Multi-faith Week (including inviting parents to share their culture), Creative Arts Week, STEM Week and Diversity Week. We have a selection of resources to support teaching and learning, e.g. “The Emmanuel Project” and “Understanding Christianity” (not always representing Christ as White). In recent years staff have undertaken training delivered by Stonewall: No Outsiders and Show Racism the Red Card.

The first Great Representation seminar was very thought-provoking and challenging on many levels. After meeting the members of our hub group (one secondary school and three primary schools), each pair shared an overview of their school.

During the day Professor Paul Miller challenged us to see the important responsibility that schools have to bring about change in our society. Institutions must transform society by challenging the status quo. This can be supported through creating effective policy. In turn, at a school level, if we are to secure change, we must challenge the concern around seeking to implement “yet another” new initiative, and the lack of resources currently available to support our aims. We must struggle for equality and mutual recognition for BAME teachers and staff. We need to make sure that identity matters for all.

Cynthia Rowe, headteacher at How Wood School, was a truly inspirational speaker. We responded to her presentation with a whole range of emotions. Listening to her experience made us even more determined to *do something*. We decided to reach out and invite her to lead a staff training session at our school. After all, the real, lived experience shared in person was going to be far more powerful than two well-meaning White women trying to relay the information. To our delight, Cynthia said yes and will be coming to Leverstock Green in January. She will lead a twilight session for staff as a springboard into our INSET day in the spring term.

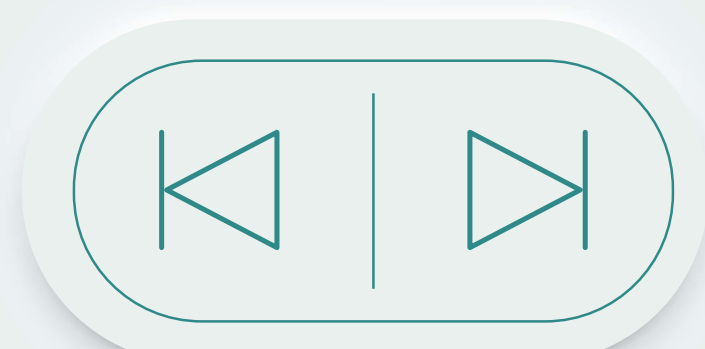
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Do children see themselves in our curriculum? After attending Day 1, we want to look at how diversity is represented across our curriculum. We intend to look at the literature we provide each class as part of their English topics, to make sure we are including a range of central characters. (We have already discussed the use of Harry Potter in Year 6 and decided, due to our context and location, this is very relevant to our pupils.) We intend to look at our curriculum maps to ensure we make best use of opportunities to represent diversity and challenge discrimination. Finally, we intend to audit our library to ensure we are offering a range of literature representing as many different heritages as possible, including those not currently present in our school community.

Before attending Day 1, we were already aware of the need to try to make our staff more representative of the community we serve. However, the challenge is that we are on the edge of the “London fringe”. Potential staff could earn more money by travelling 20 minutes in either direction. For people who come from cultures with the expectation to send money overseas to support the extended family, maximising earning potential will be a priority.

Although we already include a statement in our job adverts (suggested by a governor who works for a global corporation), it may still be too “vanilla” to attract applicants of colour. On Day 1, Professor Paul Miller suggested we include videos of our staff of colour saying why they enjoy working at our school as part of our recruitment package, so this will be a next step. We also need to include the equal opportunities form as part of our recruitment process.

We want to be more inclusive and diverse. We teach Black history but, following challenge from parents, we are aware that our Asian families feel excluded. Therefore, we need to make sure that everyone can see themselves in the curriculum.

Several staff members feel at risk of accusations of racism. There have been occasions where our policies have been consistently and correctly applied, and yet parents have made accusations of racism. This leaves staff feeling vulnerable and unsure as to how to defend themselves. In some cases it has put up an unnecessary barrier between school and families.

After receiving two refugee pupils who spoke no English, we found the lack of support and communication from external agencies very challenging, ultimately leading to significant safeguarding issues. It would also be beneficial to receive training and support for translating information for parents into uncommon dialects.

From parent voice activity completed by governors, we know that parents feel we could do more for mixed-heritage families, but they have not known what they would like to see. Generally, there is a fear of getting things wrong and causing offence, as well as an anxiety about keeping up with the constantly changing language around race. These are barriers for staff.

## October 2023

As both of us attending the programme are also school governors, we followed up the training by attending the governor course, *Behaviour and Race Equality and Anti-Racism Briefing*. Toks Olusamokun, HFL Education race equity adviser, spoke. This was very beneficial as she addressed some of our concerns regarding recruitment and unconscious bias. We are putting the advice and suggestions into practice for any future recruitment.

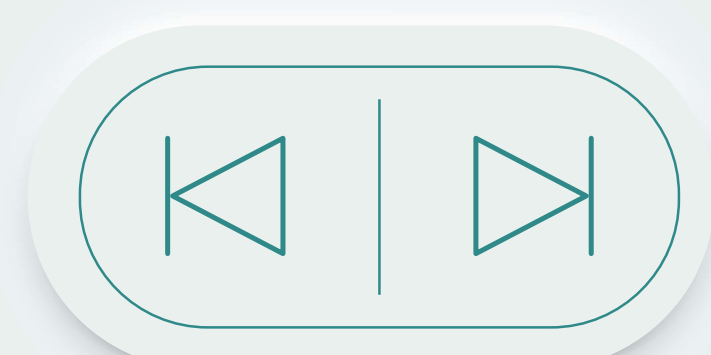
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Our first school visit was to Pope Paul Catholic Primary School in Potters Bar. The visit was a good opportunity to see how another school works and was a valuable exercise. The children in the school were engaged and were currently in the middle of One World Week. Good practice included each class researching a country where a child in the class was from. This led to a more detailed and firsthand experience for all of the class. Those pupils were also elevated to the position of “expert in the room”, giving them kudos among their peers. The activity also enabled pupils to see their teachers learning alongside them. As church school leaders we discussed how Jesus and his mother Mary are too often portrayed as White, which is almost certainly not historically accurate. We discussed the importance of ensuring that a range of religious art is available to pupils.

The question we asked ourselves was, *Are we doing enough about celebrating different cultures?* We were impressed with our visit to Pope Paul School and our observations of the One World Week. Even though One World Week closed in September 2023, we have decided to implement something similar ourselves.

Already, our staff are becoming more aware of the need to review our practice across all aspects of the school’s work. Our computing lead has developed a display for all to see. The focus is “Computing Legends”, including pictures and information about a range of people. Many of the protected characteristics are represented, and already the display has led to lots of discussion with and between children.

### November 2023

During the second seminar we were challenged on institutional racism and race equity. We were particularly moved by Sufian Sadiq’s retelling of his experiences of racism and the impact they have had on him. Sufian shared the definition of race, and he spoke of race being used to justify capitalism and colonisation. We were challenged around colonised representations. In our culture – whether that is our country, government or school – we are heavily influenced by the entrenched institutionalism of our society. We therefore need to address deep-rooted beliefs.

Throughout the session, Sufian constantly held us to account. He challenged us on why we chose to teach, asked whether we were following like sheep, and made us consider the influence of the media and branding. He pointed out that Jesus is represented as White and blonde, and that being White and blonde is considered good. This narrative is still portrayed in the media. Such probes could only lead to us reviewing our own stance and views.

Sufian asserted that we are all slightly racist and that the impact of media still feeds into this way of thinking. He shared stories from the national news to reiterate the point, for example the Rochdale grooming case. This involved 27 men, ten of whom were White, but this was not highlighted by the media. In contrast, there has been recent exposure of a group of White paedophiles, but this has not been reported in the national news. This builds on the negative narrative that Black and Asian people are evil.

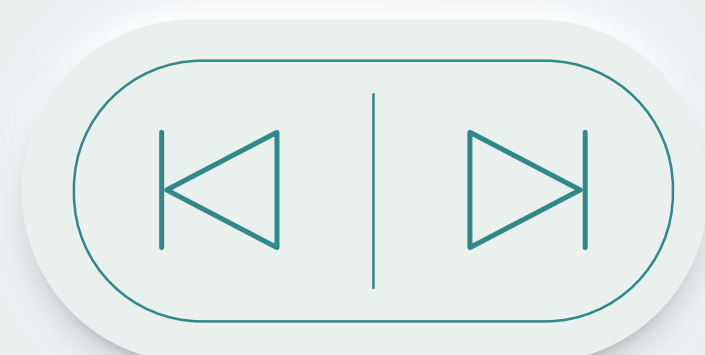
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Our next hub visit was to Nobel School. We were invited to spend time in lessons and to conduct some pupil voice work. From the perspective of primary practitioners, observing KS3 and KS4 lessons was very interesting. The demographic of the school was very different to ours, with a much higher BAME representation. We were struck by the consistency between lessons and the pride in their school that emanated from the students. The students talked passionately about Black History Month and how different cultures are celebrated in other ways, such as the cultural cuisine days offered throughout the year.

The pupil voice session provided some differing opinions. When asked whether it was more important to them to have an excellent teacher who enabled them to achieve their best or to have a teacher who represented their heritage, there were mixed responses from the students. Students of Asian heritage tended to want the best teachers, regardless of heritage, but Black African students felt representation to be more important. This was particularly interesting, given our own staff are predominantly White or mixed heritage, and it is something we would like to address in future. It would be interesting to find out what our pupils and parents think.

On the third day of training, we were challenged to look at other aspects of the protected characteristics of disability, sexual orientation and gender, as well as race. Looking at the curriculum, do we include these aspects with the intention of avoiding tokenism? Do we address what is “normal” – the implication being that there is an *abnormal*, with the normal being a European, White heterosexual man. What message are we sending to the children? We need to *usualise* each person and promote their individual sense of belonging.

Sue Sanders, from Schools OUT UK, also challenged us on the use of the word normal and how this can make children feel abnormal. She proposed that we start to implement the use of the word *usual*. To aid this, we need to demystify the differences between people, making sure this is not tokenistic. Children need to be given opportunities to be exposed to the protected characteristics. The best way to achieve this is to make sure that the curriculum is designed to include coverage of these aspects, so that a whole-school approach is implemented.

There are two areas we plan to implement in this academic year:

1. We were recommended the book *Race Cars* by Jenny Devenny and purchased a copy to look at, with the intention to use the text on World Book Day in March.
2. Following on from the Diversity Week that we held last year (which included No Outsiders), we are planning a Diversity Day in the summer term. We have a programme of enrichment weeks, including diversity, which run on a four-year cycle. However, we feel it's important to keep shining a spotlight on diversity each year as well as providing planned opportunities within the curriculum.

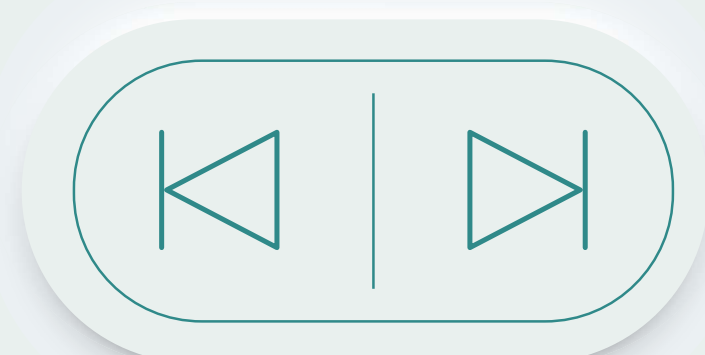
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## January 2024

We started the new year by preparing for the visit by our Great Representation hub group. On the day our visiting colleagues were shown around the school by the Change Team (school council) and had time to ascertain pupil voice with a group of Year 6 pupils. An issue that came up in the pupil voice activity was that a mixed-heritage Year 6 child said that when she was in Reception class, a teacher had spoken to her in such a way that she still held onto the words, to such a degree that she did not trust staff. This challenged us to think about how we make a difference to her and for her to feel heard, so that she doesn't continue to have these fears as she moves on to secondary school.

As part of the day, we left the six colleagues from our hub with a group of Year 6 children, and the school council children accompanied our colleagues on a tour around the school. The feedback was almost all positive. During an RE lesson, a Year 4 child was asked whether they had lessons on all religions. They replied that they did and that they felt that they were all cared for. This was very satisfying, as our chosen Biblical scripture is "For you are all the children of God".

During the fourth seminar we discussed some of the race issues that are currently in the news and how we might address these in the classroom. We agreed that, as ours is a primary school, certain news items would be difficult to broach with pupils.

David Gillborn, emeritus professor of Critical Race Studies at Birmingham University, stated that racism is a socially constructed concept. He talked about society being colour-blind and said that systemic racism is historic. We need to have the "belief that one should treat all persons equally, without regard to their race". We need to challenge ourselves, as race inequity is being normalised – an ever present and predictable part of education.

What can be done? Inequalities have been around for centuries. As educators we can't do everything, as this is ingrained in society. A critical mass is required. We must find like-minded colleagues. *Counting* is a good place to start. We need to analyse basic statistics, including attainment and behaviour data, and let the data start a conversation in our setting. Is there a deficit?

In Year 6 we introduced the book *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan – a pictorial book about refugees. The children have been really engaged with the learning. Questions were asked regarding how refugees might feel. Some children identified that they have not been through these experiences, so it was hard to relate to a person in that position. Some of the children were excited that they could see themselves represented in the pictures. One child stated that he was so happy that he could see people with the same colour skin as his.

There was also an instance of the use of racist language in class and, having attended Great Representation, we were much better able to handle the situation, feeling more empowered and finding a solution more effectively.

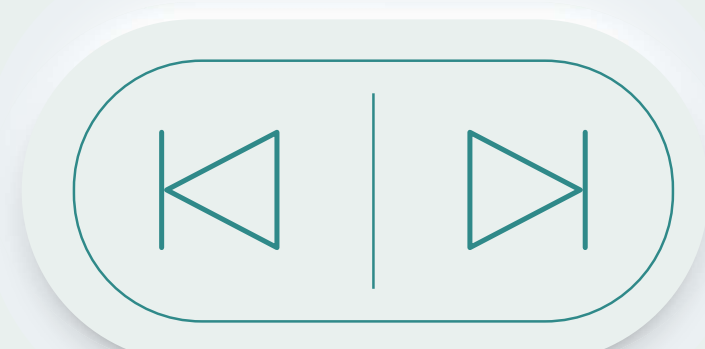
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## February 2024

As the month continued, we prepared for our INSET day. Cynthia Rowe came in to school to lead a staff development session for teachers, and we asked them all to write a reflection from it ready to share on our INSET day. Having the opportunity to listen to Cynthia again and be challenged in our thinking was very helpful. Cynthia challenged us to think about our experience; and how we can relate to, understand and genuinely empathise with BAME people. She described some of the incidents that she and her family have experienced.

Cynthia's session provided a great talking point for teachers: before 8.15 am the following day, there had been conversations with four different teachers, and some were starting to share their own experiences too. There were also professional conversations about Cynthia's suggestion of representing different identities through the objects we have in our classrooms; she suggested ethnic prints, cushions and rugs. We found ourselves debating the benefit of this versus the visual stress and fatigue the bright colours might cause several of our pupils in the school who have sensory issues. This is something we will need to decide on as a team as we continue our journey.

Governors are gradually being drawn into our conversations. The project was described to our school improvement committee, and the idea of a *representation* group was floated, with the specific remit of asking families what they think will help. One governor immediately said that, reflecting on her own experience of school, she would have liked someone to have taken the time to ask her. Now we have the possibility of a different school leader potentially taking on this aspect of the project, distributing the load across a wider group.

One of the challenges of new initiatives in school is often money. Budgets are tight, planned well in advance and finely tuned. We were grappling with this and how we were going to afford to supplement the literature we offer our pupils to ensure more pupils see themselves represented across the curriculum. As luck would have it, our unexpected bank interest proved the perfect source, and we have been busily ordering a range of books to represent many different protected characteristics. These will be shared with the team as part of our INSET day, with a view to preparing a diversity/vision day for the summer term, where we can share the books with children and parents.

We held a very fruitful INSET day on the Great Representation programme at the end of the half-term. We shared a brief summary of our learning so far with the school staff and looked at our curriculum to see how we could make sure that we are inclusive and incorporating all protected characteristics across the curriculum. We asked people to share their reactions to Cynthia's development session. Their responses were wide-ranging, and a few created even more questions for us as a team. Some people shared their own experiences of discrimination, for example as a European post-Brexit. We even heard examples of how long-established views are being challenged within our own extended families. Some of these experiences caused a great deal of emotion, both for those recounting them and those listening. There was so much experience in the room that we simply did not know about.

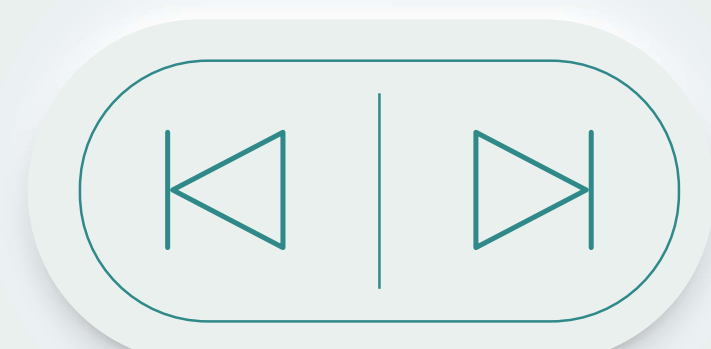
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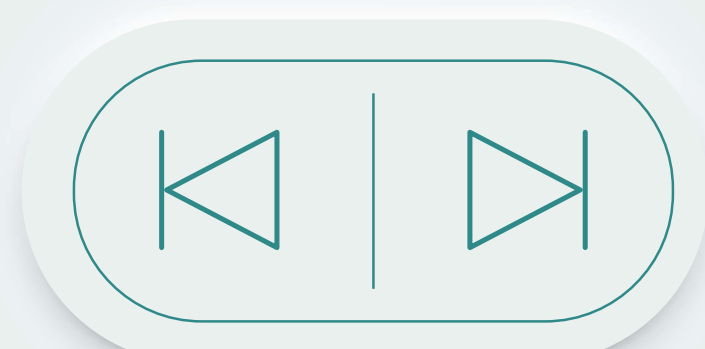
We debated the use of language and the difference between young children's curiosity, their clumsy use of language and their intention to offend. The importance of respecting how people self-identify became important as we looked at the demographics of our own school community and discussed how it has changed over the last ten years. It was clear everyone has had to deal with discrimination in different ways and in different places, and there is a need for some whole-staff training on how to deal with potential racist incidents in the future. (Although the number of recorded incidents is low, we have no doubt that it takes place.) We also discussed how we can weave even greater representation of all protected characteristics throughout our current curriculum.

We spent time planning our World Book Day activities to ensure all classes can participate in the chosen theme. Rather than ask our pupils to dress up, we decided to invite them to wear either a black or a white top (Years 2–6) or red, blue or yellow tops (Nursery to Y1), but without telling them why beforehand. (We are acutely aware of the cost-of-living pressures for our families and wanted to make the day accessible for all.) Teams spent time planning activities based on recommended texts for World Book Day, being particularly mindful of the ages and development of our very youngest children. More on this later!

Subject leaders spent the afternoon looking at their curriculum maps and identifying opportunities to weave in greater representation. Some subjects obviously lend themselves to this more easily than others, and there were some professional debates around ensuring any adaptations are meaningful rather than tokenistic.

On the fifth Great Representation day, Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga from UCL's Centre for Holocaust Education spoke to us about "Addressing Antisemitism in Troubling Times". She presented us with some thought-provoking questions such as: "What is a political view and what is pure hate?" She suggested that antisemitism is the most deeply rooted, insidious and misunderstood form of racism. Anti-Jewish hatred increases when there is conflict. Jews are demonized and attacked, and this often has genocidal implications. This has been occurring for generations. Why? There is a dehumanising of Jews, with a message of vindictive hatred and extremism. Antisemitism, defined as "a hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews", is spread through lies, stereotypes, conspiracy theories, "jokes", blame culture, slurs, jibes and extremism. Antisemitism is also denying or mocking the Holocaust or suggesting that it's been exaggerated.

To our knowledge, we have no Jewish families within our setting. We recently held a charity day and, in preparation, the Change Team (school council) talked about supporting the charity Children of Peace. Surprisingly, the class representatives were unaware of the situation in Gaza. This has shown us that we cannot presume that parents are educating their children about current affairs and, therefore, we need to make sure that we are raising these issues with the children to enable them to be aware of the world around them. We need to make sure that Jewish children are not underrepresented. With an already overloaded curriculum, finding time is very tricky, but we do want to address current affairs with the children in a manageable and age-appropriate way.

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World Book Day saw everyone enjoying stories together. Nursery, Reception and Year 1 enjoyed reading *Mixed* by Aree Chung, which is a story about multiple colours living together in harmony and what happens when one colour thinks they are better than all the rest. Year 1 explored the issue of fairness and couldn't believe it when some children were allowed to do the daily mile based on the colour of their T-shirts! Years 2–6 shared the book *Race Cars* by John Devenny, all about standing up to injustice and White supremacy. Year 3 children were challenged to a muffin-eating race, but those in black tops were not allowed to use their hands.

Not only did all these activities encourage children to enjoy books they may not have read before, but they also encouraged the children to explore issues of injustice and discrimination. In Years 5 and 6, children wearing white were allowed to line up ahead of those wearing black. The “whites” played on the playground equipment, whilst the “blacks” ran around the playground. Lots of children stated that this was unfair, and it led to some excellent conversations in class. Some of our older children of colour quickly realised what was going on and enjoyed watching their peers' reactions. This led to some outstanding discussions. Meanwhile, in Year 2, they couldn't wait for the end of the day to find out how the story ended! Feedback was obtained from the children on the day.

One child stated: “It was different in a good way. It linked to No Outsiders and it showed us exactly what racism is. Everyone had different ideas about racism.” Another said: “I liked the competition and everyone was happy for each other.” Another pupil noted: “It was good. I learned something new – how it feels to be treated badly because of your skin colour.”

While all this was going on, we returned to our school vision statement. As a church school we are obliged to have a theologically rooted vision statement. We felt our chosen scripture – For you are all the children of God (Galatians 3:26) – was still applicable, but our supporting statement wasn't very memorable. Working with children, staff, parents and governors, we have reworded our statement, making it clear that everyone is welcome at Leverstock Green. The resounding feedback from the children was “Yes, everyone is welcome here and we like it that way!”

On 25 March we visited Hillshott Infant School and Nursery. We received a warm welcome and were taken to see No Outsiders lessons, first in Reception, then in Year 2. The same content was taught, but we could observe the difference in the level of questioning. We were then given a tour of the school, including The Nest – a transition area for children who haven't achieved the early learning goals. We met with the deputy head and head of Early Years. We admired some displays, reflecting the diversity of their school population, including some carefully chosen, age-appropriate books.

The guest speaker at Seminar 6 was Dal Babu – former senior Met police chief, who works on the impact of Prevent and Extremism. As a child born to parents who were Indian and Pakistani, he shared that the biggest import from India is caste, which started in Hindu society but extended to other religions. In 2010 there was an attempt to make caste discrimination one of the protected characteristics. Bob Blackman, MP for Harrow East, blocked this (despite representing the largest Hindu population in Europe). Dal stressed that the lived experience of every child is important. They will bring this experience into the classroom. This is also the case for parents.

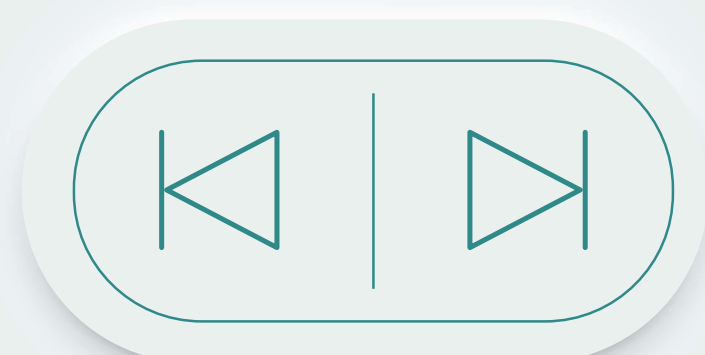
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The next speaker was Evelyn Forde, who spoke about “The Importance of Intentional Work on Race Equity”. She shared the concept of being deliberate with our actions. She suggested that being intentional means reinforcing culture, helping to build trusting relationships, showing that you care, recognising talents of staff and students (tap talent on the shoulder), language (racial literacy training) and curriculum (books, displays, build in cycles of reviews). Evelyn exhorted us to “Be relentless and never give up and be unashamedly relentless”. She asked us to educate children by giving them different experiences and opportunities, to foster a culture of belonging, and for diversity to be “baked in and not bolted on”.

The journey that we have taken as staff has put us in a position of awareness. It has opened up communication, allowing us to give each other the opportunities to say how we feel. It has also shown us how to address conversations that make us uncomfortable and to reflect on our practice as a school. Over the course of our time attending Great Representation, we have heard so many shocking stories from people that are still experiencing racism in the present day. It has given us the thirst to do what we can to aid the eradication of this toxic force within our nation, our culture and our own minds.

There is still more work to be done; it’s something which will never be completed, but for the time being we have a nine-point plan:

1. update our curriculum maps for 2024–25 to ensure that the curriculum is woven with the Great Representation thread
2. review the impact of new diversity books
3. plan and deliver the summer term vision day
4. promote the summer 1 worship theme – “All the children of God”
5. supplement EYFS role play resources (avoiding tokenism)
6. introduce child led worship based on current affairs
7. set up a diversity working group in school – led by a governor
8. provide governor training and add representation to link governor reports
9. further training for all staff on dealing with racist incidents

*Vikkie Burgess and Becky Newman*

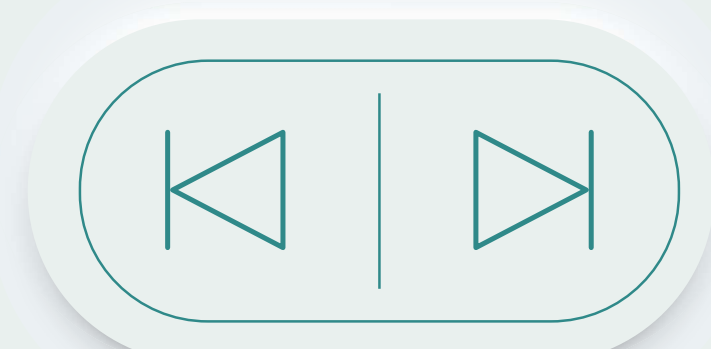
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# MAPLE CROSS JMI SCHOOL

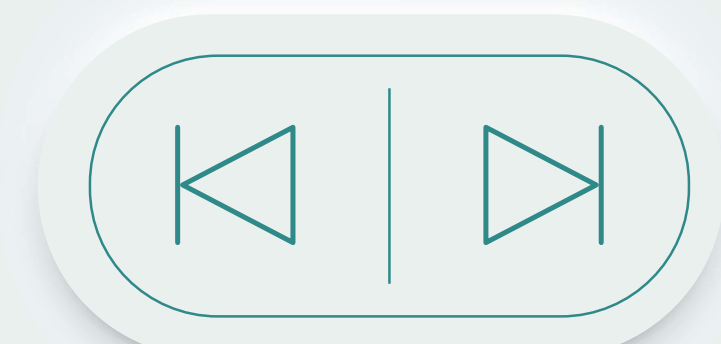
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## September 2023

At Maple Cross JMI we are committed to improving our race equity practice and developing an active culture of anti-racism within our school and local community. This has come from a moral purpose driven by school leaders and individuals, who want to leave the Maple Cross community *in a better place*.

While there are not endless reports of racism, many of us have heard small comments that highlight a hidden racist voice, from pupils and families alike. This was most evident on a sports day, the day after the Brexit vote, when we hosted a big family picnic. Many staff felt uncomfortable listening to the problematic comments from parents and carers about being glad that people who don't belong in Britain would have to leave. Reflecting on historical racist incidents within school, there have been comments such as "You have Brown skin like poo", with subsequent investigations concluding that this was not racist. Our understanding of what racism is and our threshold of racism in school need to be challenged with a greater force.

Approximately five years ago, a Black pupil left school. The pupil's parents shared that they wanted their child to be in a school nearer their place of work and briefly mentioned not wanting their child to be the only Black child at the school. In looking back, why did we not discuss this more openly and honestly with this parent?

Maple Cross is a one-form-entry school with 168 pupils on roll, although there is high mobility and this number fluctuates throughout the academic year. With 77% of the school identifying as White British, we recognise that we have a responsibility to proactively seek opportunities for diverse representation if we want to challenge the pervasive White dominant culture in our locality and the White privilege that comes with it.

Professor Paul Miller said in the first seminar of the programme, "There is systemic racism in society, there is systemic racism in Hertfordshire, and thus there is systemic racism in your school." We are aware of the unconscious bias – the "invisible" racism – that exists in our school community, and we seek the guidance of leaders and peers on this programme in transforming it. We may know how to recognise and challenge blatant racism, but it is the subtle undertones of racism – like the anti-immigrant tone on that sports day – that we need to work against to protect and better our children.

We pride ourselves on being an inclusive school with a therapeutic approach to every child's development. Our pupils are equipped with the language and skills to communicate their emotions, work through conflict and identify their needs. We have achieved this conscientious culture through curriculum initiatives such as Thrive and Forest School; as well as by developing shared language and communication practices, which have been embedded in all staff and, subsequently, in our pupils. Based on the success of this, we look to adopt a similar model with our approach to EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) work.

We know that to develop a desired culture within a school, it must become suffused into daily practice in all tiers of leadership; it must be written into priorities and policies. If we want to become an anti-racist school, EDI must be at the forefront of the minds of our staff leaders, and there must be shared language and shared communication approaches to racial issues in school. In appreciation of this, we have included anti-racism in our school improvement plan, which has filtered down into the action plans of each subject leader and into the appraisal targets of teaching staff.

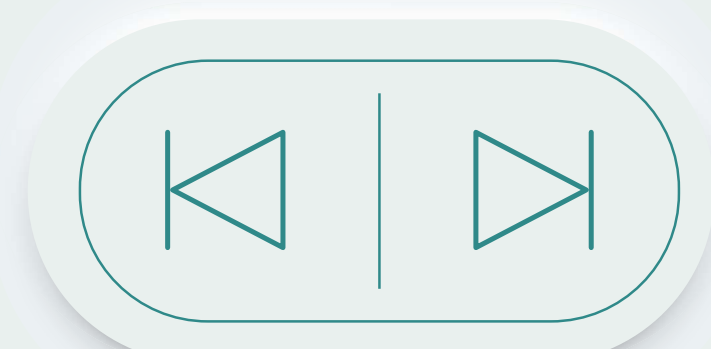
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Our intent with this programme is not only to create a culture of anti-racism in our school community. We also want to examine the existing diversity within the majority White British cohort and evaluate if we are meeting the needs of our community. Within that wide bracket of White British fall other minority groups that deserve further consideration. What percentage of this group is Irish Traveller, and how are we including them? What about religious groups? What about sexual orientation? And although, culturally, we have come a long way, are we still challenging our representation of women and gender stereotypes?

Coming away from our first seminar of the programme, the word that stuck with us was *belong*. We realised that this powerful word does not have a strong presence in our curriculum, and we realise how important it is for our young people to know – and hear – that they belong. We know that having a sense of belonging – a sense of place and purpose in the world – can counteract experiences of alienation and susceptibility. A sense of belonging is essential for the whole development of a child, and we have to question whether all of our children feel a sense of belonging in our school.

### October 2023

As the Great Representation project has gathered momentum, we have been shifting between two key foci:

1. the need to broaden our own knowledge
2. the need to review strategies for our school

The emotional impact that the seminars deliver creates this impetus to *Go, go, go!*, but it has been important to ensure we have the arsenal needed to increase confidence in staff and to bring challenging discussions to the forefront of everyone's actions and minds.

Our first action has been to audit our reading and writing texts to ensure we have high-quality texts featuring protagonists of colour. Taking the time to scrutinise our books, it was astounding to see how many subtle stereotypes were being promoted. We removed any books that we felt did not fit our value system. Most startling was that many of the books with Black and brown characters had a story about overcoming adversity. While it is important that this adversity is acknowledged, we considered the narrative we are constructing for our young people, who don't necessarily interact with many Brown and Black people, when we only give them stories of those people struggling. We decided it was important for our children to see Black and Brown characters like any others within stories.

Following on from this initial book audit, our history lead then carefully selected new books for our banded book library – books that are frequently read by pupils across the school. Some of the books link to our existing history topics, but some provide the opportunity to learn about other inspiring individuals not encompassed by our curriculum. Some examples are Sophie German (the “undercover mathematician”), Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (first female doctors), Mairi Chisholm (Scottish volunteer for the Women's Emergency Corps), Joseph Bologne (18th-century Black musician), John Blanke (the Black “Tudor Trumpeter”), and the “Parade of Pipers” (travelling recyclers). We chose to forego some other texts that heavily depicted the enslavement of Black people. We again considered the narrative we are giving our students, who may have little exposure to Black people and Black culture. We don't want their first and potentially lasting impressions to be of oppression and struggle.

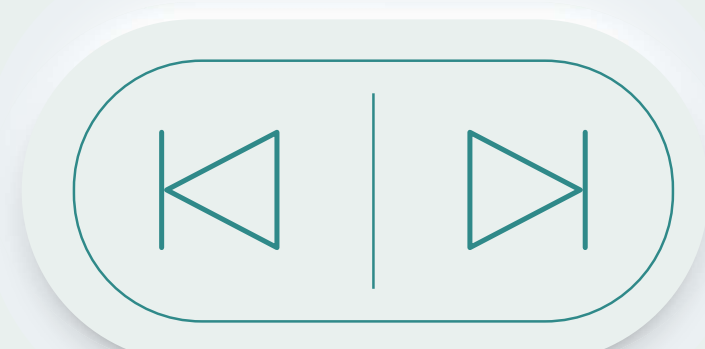
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In a similar vein, we've begun to examine the history curriculum to ensure that we celebrate the successes of people of colour and do not perpetuate a narrative of Black and Brown people being dominated over and victimised by White racism. We want to inspire with possibility and hope for something better. We have had discussions with our peers on the programme about teaching Black history and about the choice to teach or not teach themes of historical oppression such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade. There is a school of thought that, by not teaching it, we do not acknowledge it; and our students don't benefit from an honest, reflective look at history. Then there is an alternative school of thought, that to teach it is to reinforce the damaging narratives of victim/oppressor and to potentially retraumatise our vulnerable pupils. We're not sure if there is one right way to do it.

One of our history topics that merits a closer look is our WWI topic which currently neglects to acknowledge the contributions of Black and Brown people in the war effort. Including this in our WWI topic would celebrate these oft-forgotten contributions to the war effort and perhaps inspire that sense of belonging within our curriculum. The addition of this missing piece in our WWI curriculum would also fortify another one of our topics: the Windrush. In order to fully understand the prejudice and the betrayal the Windrush generation felt, pupils should be taught about the prior events of WWI and WWII, and the allegiance of the Windrush generation to "the motherland". There is a balance to be struck in oscillating between the successes and contributions of Black people in history, and the reality of the obstacles they have had to overcome and the continued impact today.

We have shared our learning from the Great Representation project with our governing body and teaching staff. We knew it was essential to enlist the whole school team in our mission. It has also been a sense of comfort to know we may be disrupting people's status quo, and it is essential that the school is supportive as we undertake this project. In our staff CPD we asked staff and subject leaders to consider how they can be a part of the movement. When creating their action plans for the year, subject leaders were required to factor in an anti-racist action. Actions included promoting diversity within STEM and challenging existing stereotypes of certain disciplines and professions. We are excited to see these take root throughout the year as the project becomes further embedded in the school.

We have also shared the Great Representation project with parents and kept them informed of the journey, through regular updates in our newsletters. The idea of a parent action group has been floated. This is seed sowing at this stage, to see how parents can be key allies within this development.

To put the project at the forefront of everyone's mind, we created a display in the school foyer featuring historical Black figures. The display offers challenging questions and thought-provoking ideas. It includes cut-outs of hands in different skin tones, with written commitments by staff and governors alike on how they will contribute to the project. Below the display is a beautiful collection of books with Black and Brown main characters, children's books about racism, and books about different religious beliefs and people from different walks of life. It is important to us that Great Representation is visible to everyone who walks into our school. This was confirmed as a positive action when a new family visiting our school commented that it was encouraging to know this is talked about and such value is placed on it.

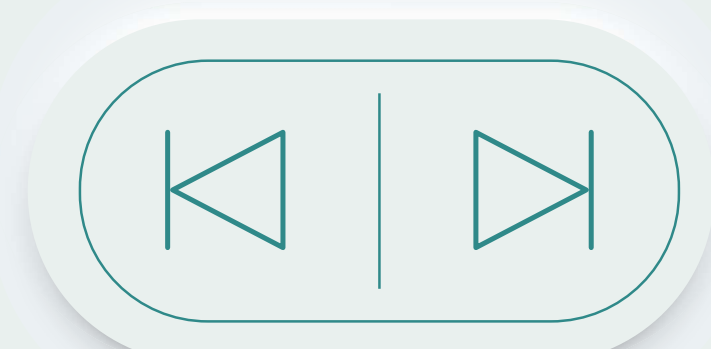
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We also had the pleasure of visiting St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School, one of our peer schools on the programme. This school is very different to our setting, both in number and in student body makeup. The school has gone from being one-form-entry to three-form in the span of ten years and is highly diverse. Being a Catholic school, it hosts people of Christian faith but attracts many pupils of different faiths and religions as well.

The school attracts a lot of religious students, no matter the religion, because many families find there is a commonality between them – an existing value system. We found this interesting, as the majority of families in our school register as having no religion. We know that religion offers a sense of community and belonging and, with many of our families not belonging to a religion and our school being non-secular, we question how we can create a similar sense of community and service in our school.

Hearing the efforts of St Philip Howard staff to get to know the backgrounds of their communities was inspiring. Over the years, they have built enough trust with their families to learn the details of their housing situations, immigration status, and literacy or illiteracy. They’ve also been brave in asking their families how they can improve. One key example of this concerned the sandpit in the playground. School staff noticed after the first week that none of their Black pupils were playing in the sandpit. The staff decided to ask some of the families why this was and learned that it was due to the sand getting into their children’s hair. They then found a solution to this by investing in shower caps so that the sandpit could be inclusive to all. By building these trusting relationships with parents, noticing details and asking key questions, the school has been able to learn more about their pupils and create more accessibility.

**November 2023**

The November session of Great Representation was deeply challenging and moving. Many sat with tears rolling down their faces after a raw and truthful talk from one of the incredible speakers. When the speaker noticed our distress, he approached us and asked if we were OK. He seemed almost apologetic for having upset us, further adding to our feeling of collective guilt. How could our hour of upset compare to his lifetime of obstacles and pain? We left the seminar feeling almost speechless, unable to translate the impact of the day when we returned to our homes and school. This seminar had cemented us in. If we were ever on the fence or uncertain before, we no longer were. We felt deflated but never more motivated than by anything we’d ever experienced in education. Everyone needs to know the impact of racism and to feel it. This work is more important than anything else.

The first session and visit to our first hub school have challenged our school’s understanding of belonging. We have begun the Anti-Bullying Alliance’s work this academic year, and this has also highlighted the theme of belonging. At this point, belonging appears to have swum to the surface as our most needed focus. The key results that our pupils shared are as follows:

Question	Never	A little	A lot	Always
I feel safe at school	2%	10%	24%	17%
I feel like I belong at school	6%	18%	20%	9%

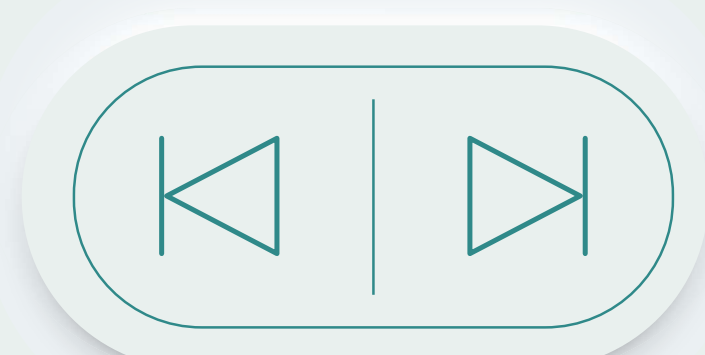
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The visit to St Philip Howard School challenged our thinking further. We have predominantly one “group” at school, and children still feel they do not belong. What causes a lack of belonging, and how can we better understand this? Our newly updated School Parliament will be a key ally in our work. This will be led by one of our assistant heads, who is not directly part of the Great Representation project, but this adds to the impact as more people come on board.

### December 2023

The programme started with the *Why*, but we’ve now transitioned into the *How* stage.

An area that we’ve identified as a school wherein we have the most power for change lies in constructing a thoughtfully planned and inclusive curriculum. Bennie Kara’s talk on Day 3 shared the passion needed to understand the power of our curriculum and the importance of disciplinary knowledge (acknowledging knowledge is constructed) versus substantive knowledge (indisputable facts). Some things have been taught as substantive knowledge when in fact they’re not, particularly in the history curriculum. We have the opportunity to refine and reshape our curriculum, based on what we know our community needs.

The notion of multi-perspectivity became a clear focus, as we aim to offer increasing *parallel stories* within history. A small tweak in the wording at the Remembrance service provided an opportunity to remember all those who fought, and to list countries who were part of the war effort, beyond the White commonwealth countries. Sometimes these small changes are needed to be drip-fed across what we do. This highlights the need for lots of little changes and some big rewrites too. We discussed again how widening the lens on our WWI topic would work in conjunction with our Windrush topic, which looks at post-war migration and would have our children make greater connections. We then discussed revisiting our Windrush topic and ensuring it highlights the mistreatment of West Indian migrants without perpetuating victim narratives, which we know are detrimental.

Migration, as a theme, was once again raised when looking at history topics such as the Vikings, which are often taught under the title of *invaders*. The implication of this word was discussed and how when other nations come to Britain, the terms *invaders* and *immigrants* are commonly used, but British colonialism is often described with more sanitised words such as *empire*. A lightbulb moment within this session was identifying the second-order history concept of migration as a thread that already runs throughout our history curriculum and can be further amplified. We discussed that this would be a high priority in our curriculum, to circumvent the anti-immigration viewpoints within our wider school community. A number of child-appropriate books and texts to deepen student and staff knowledge alike have been ordered and added to the school’s reading den. This is another example of a small change that will run alongside bigger curriculum reviews.

### January 2024

As the spring term has begun, we have used whole-school Key Stage 1 and 2 assemblies as our vehicle to get all pupils, staff and the wider community talking about race and a sense of belonging. As the Great Representation project has gone on, it is becoming clearer how a sense of belonging brings benefits beyond that of an anti-racist agenda. A sense of belonging impacts all, including those with protected characteristics.

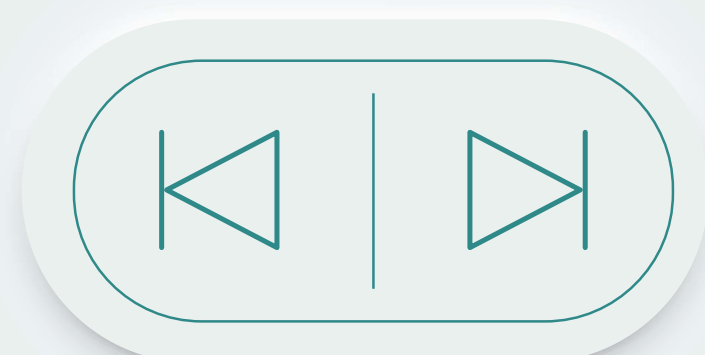
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The suggested wider readings have been powerful tools in our setting to begin to increase staff confidence. Beginning with *Wish We Knew What to Say* by Dr Pragya Agarwal and *Diversity in Schools* by Bennie Kara, our staff are equipping themselves with the knowledge and language to confidently converse on the topic of race. Ensuring a culture of outward-looking staff is essential to push Maple Cross forward to make a positive difference within society.

The children's book *Race Cars* by Jenny Devenny has been a powerful catalyst to start discussions at age-appropriate levels. When the first part of this book was read in assembly, many children gasped and whispered of unfairness. The theme of the advantage given to the white car and the disadvantages placed on the black car allowed a complex notion of White privilege to be discussed. What was most striking to staff present in the assembly was when the White headteacher made a comparison with herself and a Brown colleague. Many children turned to look at a Brown member of staff, but this was not the member of staff that the headteacher had named. This reinforces that our children see differences but are possibly lumping together individuals of same/similar colours.

On a recent parent tour for a prospective parent, questions were raised about the diversity of the school. While both parents were White, questions were asked about how school promotes a wider narrative of religions and cultures. It was heartwarming to think we are not in this fight alone and that there are White families seeking a school that fosters a culture of inclusivity and celebration.

We were again reminded that we aren't in this fight alone when we visited Leventhorpe School – fellow peers on the programme. We were struck by the sense of creativity and comfort in this secondary school. We met with a couple of members of staff who shared their EDI work with us. One member of staff who spearheaded Culture Week shared how, in planning the events, he had to think considerably about how to engage harder-to-reach pupils. The event has led to all staff thinking creatively about ways to enhance culture, even through small menu changes. Another member of staff, the EDI lead, talked to us about a staff CPD she led unpicking the problematic language that qualifies as microaggressions. She spoke about the subsequent increase in reported racism once she had trained staff. It was inspiring to hear that staff felt more confident challenging racism directly after having had staff training. Staff said that they also felt more confident challenging other forms of discrimination such as sexism, homophobia and ableism.

We also had the honour of meeting with the school's head learner, a Black girl who has been in Leventhorpe since Year 7. We learned that she was the only Black girl in a predominantly White primary school – circumstances a Black pupil at Maple Cross might relate to. She said the most important thing she could convey was having representation. She emphasised that this means so much. She also said that for Black people, hair is a big part of the culture and is something that isn't always understood or tolerated by others. She spoke positively about the changes she has seen in Leventhorpe in the time she has been there, which was inspiring to hear. We came

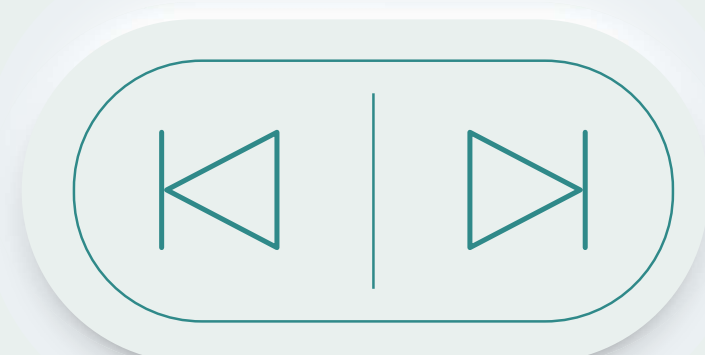
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away from Leventhorpe considering how we could make our few Black children feel represented and understood and that they belonged in our school.

## February 2024

We are beginning to see the work we have started ripple out in our school.

Our Year 3 teacher, a Brown woman, shared the sense of validation she felt when her class were doing Lego learning, and a child selected four Brown Lego figures – “just like you!” The teacher felt seen and celebrated, and likewise, the child felt excited to see her teacher within the Lego figures.

Our EYFS lead shared a video with her team about dolls and perceptions. She came away sharing the deep impact the video had had on the team.

Another EYFS practitioner went on an anti-racism training course, specific to the Early Years, and was keen to bring back new insights to the rest of the team.

A child in Reception read a book with a character with afro hair and excitedly said, “That’s like my hair!” The other pupils then joined in with him and asked him questions, with genuine interest, about his hair.

After leading music lessons where children were exposed to music from different traditions, teachers were startled by some of the rude responses of the children and even more startled by the flippancy of the parents when told their children weren’t respectful of different cultural music.

Staff have become more and more confident to share their own reading and actions. We have started to see a shift from those of us attending Great Representation leading to other staff sharing what they have read and shared with their teams.

When we spoke with HFL Education’s race equality adviser Shammi Rahman, she highlighted that no action is too small. There was a slight eureka moment when we noticed that lots of little changes were rippling out to create more of a seismic change. The discussions also highlighted how Great Representation has been just the beginning of the anti-racist agenda at Maple Cross. Looking at how more and more members of staff can be vocal in the anti-racist agenda is crucial.

As we continue to reflect on our curriculum, three years after it was revamped for September 2021, the key threads that run through the curriculum continue to need refining and highlighting. The school’s three key ethos attributes – reflect, lead and aspire – need to sit alongside a sense of belonging and, in turn, anti-racism. Work has now begun to ensure no curriculum area sits in a silo but rather connects, and that these key themes very deliberately and accurately run through to ensure the curriculum as a whole is purposeful and organised. This work is beginning and will be running well into the next academic year and beyond.

A recurring theme throughout this programme has been unpicking modern-day racist rhetoric. While we all recognise the overt forms of racism through derogatory slurs and graffiti symbols, the racist rhetoric in most of our interpersonal interactions will look a lot more subtle. In our fifth seminar, we read an anonymised parent letter to a school, which contested the teaching of the Holocaust. We identified the language that implied Holocaust denial (“questionable events and figures”, “Jewish people may have experienced difficulties in the past”) and the language that created *otherness* such as saying that teaching the Holocaust doesn’t fit into “our British history”. We have to

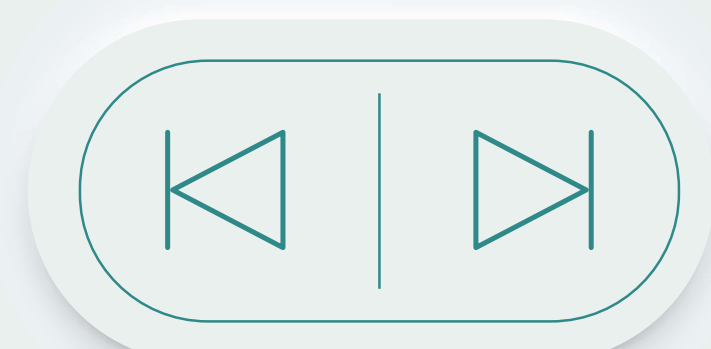
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navigate this *hidden racism*. It is just as harmful as more overt forms and, if anything, more insidious.

This was followed by Penny Rabiger, who brilliantly defined anti-racist work as “pointing at elephants”. She advocated for being an outlier in the staffroom, challenging others and taking the risk of ruffling feathers. She then gave a thorough framework for creating an anti-racist school, ranging from working with transportation services to eradicate racial bias towards families commuting to school, to challenging all CPD providers to include anti-racism within their training curriculum. She says, “There should be no staff training that doesn’t have a thread of anti-racism running through it.” She also used the term *drip, drip*, arguing that we must find every opportunity to drip feed racial literacy into our work.

Another key takeaway from Penny was the notion of creating a *forward* curriculum. There may not currently be a certain minority group in your school cohort, but lay the groundwork for them now and provide those windows for the rest of the student body, to develop empathy for other people’s experiences. This harked back to a CPD led by HFL Education adviser Kate Kelner-Dilks earlier in the year, where she referenced *windows* and *mirrors*. Mirrors provide the opportunity for children to see themselves in the curriculum; windows provide the opportunity to see into another experience. We want a curriculum that offers both.

### March 2024

It is the final month of the programme, and we have been building in anticipation and excitement to finally host our peers at Maple Cross JMI and share the culture embedded within our school. Unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts, the visit has had to be postponed. While initially disappointed, we have come to see this instead as an opportunity to carry on with our collaborative work after the programme’s official close. Our peer schools are still eager to visit Maple Cross, and likewise, we are keen to have them visit and give us feedback. We have discussed a few times how, even though we are nearing the end of the programme, we feel we are just at the beginning of our anti-racist journey.

Great Representation has given us the resolve and the inspiration to change the practice in our school, but we respect that this is not a quick fix. Although we are spurred on by the small shifts we have seen, we know it will require time to create true and lasting change. We have felt bolstered by the trust and accountability developed amongst peers on this programme and seek to continue developing these professional relationships. The cancellation of our school visit, and the agreement between our group to reschedule the visit after the programme’s completion, supports us in continuous collaborative practice. We want this to be sustainable, and we know this will require support from leaders and peers alike.

We have started to shift the culture in our setting, and staff say that our anti-racism initiative feels *present* in the school – it’s not just an idea. We have seen *small changes*, which are the resulting ripples of our drip-feeding of anti-racism into more and more staff training. We have plans for how to continue this work next year, which include continued work with HFL Education advisers in both training our staff and supporting the refinement of the curriculum. We have appointed a governor to oversee anti-racism in school and are floating ideas of how to bridge out to parents, even holding parent workshops. We feel inspired and we also feel the urgency to see this work through. We want all of our young

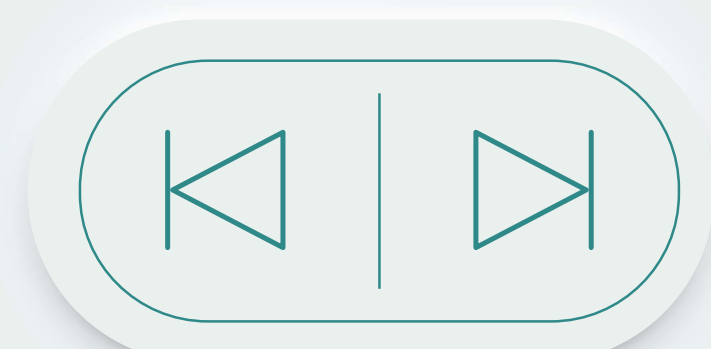
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people to feel a sense of belonging so they can reach their aspirations.

*Katie Saxon and Hannah Trickett*

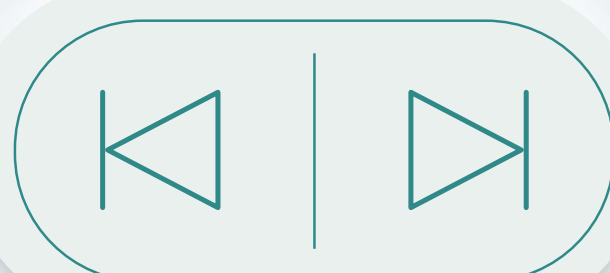
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# MOUNT GRACE SCHOOL

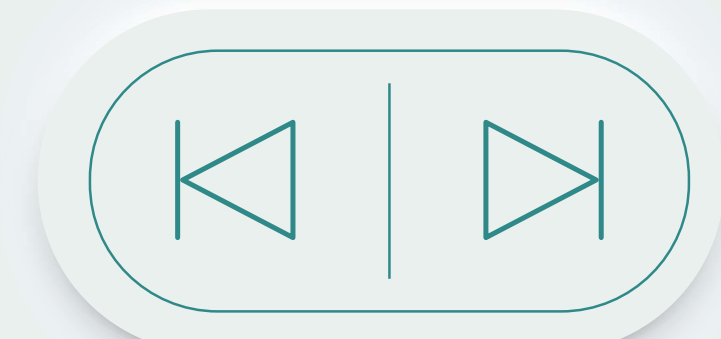
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## September 2023

Our new school vision boasts inclusion in the very first line: *Mount Grace School is an inclusive, first-choice community school that cares for and meets the needs of all its students, who achieve ambitiously as a result of great expectations and excellent teaching.*

It now goes on to include a line that was informed by the strong views of a group of students who, in June 2023, challenged why there was nothing about *belonging* in the vision: *We are proud to belong and build strong character to support students to navigate the world around them so that they can lead happy, successful and healthy lives.*

We pride ourselves on the strong pastoral and nurturing support that our school offers. We invest in making children feel good. But is this the same as making them feel good about who they are? Is it the same as allowing them to embrace their identity so they have pride in their heritage?

Mount Grace is a relatively small, four-form-entry secondary school, and the majority of the students are from a White working-class background. From the information given by the parents at the point of their child's enrolment, the largest group (61.6%) is White British pupils, followed by White Other (7.6%). Each the other remaining 36 groups is represented by less than 3.5% of the student body. How did parents differentiate between White Other and Any Other White Background, White Eastern European, Other White British or White English? Questions were raised before we had even started to analyse the rich strands of the range of global majority groups.

Before embarking on the Great Representation programme, the priority for leaders had been to improve equity, diversity and inclusion generally. In our incredible work to increase STEM uptake for girls, tackle the misogyny of Andrew Tate, raise disability awareness, become more neurodiverse-aware in our practice, increase access to dance for boys, celebrate *Pride*, tackle homophobia (and more!) had left little time to engage in discussions about race equity.

We like to think that our staff buy into an ethos of anti-racism, and yet how could our school possibly be immune to the systemic global race inequities at play? We celebrated and were excited when last year we ran an EDI Day. This was a day on which we acknowledged that *We cannot know what we have not lived*, and we therefore exposed our students to activities that broadened their understanding and knowledge about people beyond and outside of their direct experience. The day cultivated a safe place for some students to share their vulnerabilities and their experiences of racism. For others it allowed them to share for the first time their sexual orientation.

Whilst the reviews of the day, from both staff and students, were overwhelmingly positive, we could not ignore the quiet voice of discomfort that whispered: *Why did we need a planned day off timetable before some students felt they had a voice and belonged?* We also reflected on the timetable for that day and the activities on offer. Our hearts sank as, yet again, activities specifically around race awareness were overshadowed by the activities for other (equally important) protected characteristics. Where do we invest in equipping staff and students with the language to really talk about the struggles and legacy of racial injustice and discrimination?

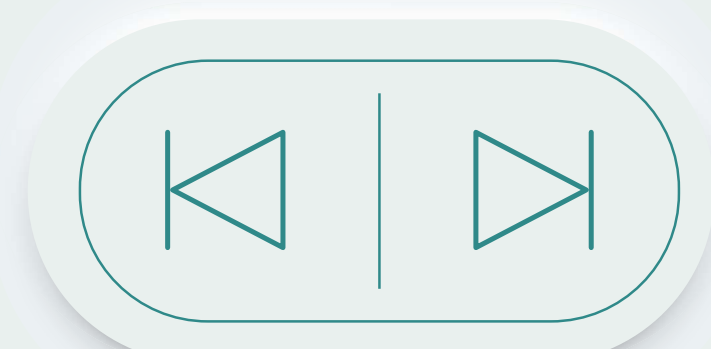
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Geeta is an English specialist and Hannah an MFL specialist, so between us, we want to harness the power of language and literature to support race equity and give students a true sense of belonging. Work has already been done at curriculum level and in evaluating what access children have to interesting characters from all backgrounds in their reading. But there is plenty more work to do to ensure our physical, learning and emotional environment communicates loudly to our children and staff that – at Mount Grace School and in the wider world thereafter – they have a voice and can be proud to belong.

### October 2023

It's fair to say that we were right to arrive at our first session with the mindset *We don't know what we don't know*. Our mission to remind each other and everyone else in the school that *We cannot know what we have not lived* was in the forefront of our minds, and we were ready to be inspired.

There was no escaping the facts and statistics we heard in the introduction to the day around attainment, destinations and sanctions for students of minority ethnic heritage. We reflected on the fact that we do have representation of a range of ethnicities on our staff body at all levels as well as representation from gay and non-binary identifying staff, but we avoid using them in a tokenistic way to promote diversity. How many times have we put the assembly rota together and thought, *This one about Black History month; who should we ask to do that?*, and then allowed the staff faces to flash through our mind like a Rolodex until it settles on the most confident and outspoken Black head of learning. And then Professor Paul Miller, with his wisdom, gave us the language we hadn't quite accessed, with three simple words: *Own your privilege*.

Yes! As school leaders we do have privilege. We have different privileges that are built on access to different opportunities, experiences, qualifications, but it is undeniable that we are both privileged. How could we own that privilege to compensate for the underprivilege of some of our students? How do we spot the students who are not being elevated and compensated for what they have lacked in privileges? What levers do we have as leaders to make things better? These were all questions raised and answered during the session.

Professor Miller confirmed that Mount Grace School was in the minority of 1.9% that currently have a headteacher who is non-White. Our student body is 27.1% non-White and our staff body 14.2%. We reflected on what this might mean for recruitment and diversity. We considered where we post our job adverts and were then not surprised at why we are not getting the role models our children need. Hearing about the personal impact that the phrase *You see me, you hear me, I belong* had on Professor Miller, we reflected on when we had ever asked our students or staff whether they felt like we see them and hear them, and what this means for how much they feel they belong.

This week we had a PGCE student ask us about an appropriate space for praying during the day and whether we had a multi-faith room. We told her we didn't but that we would find her an appropriate space. How many of our students and staff, past and present, have felt that they couldn't ask because their faith and practice doesn't belong in our school? What could be the impact of a line in our literature, job adverts, welcome letters asking whether they require access to a multi-faith room? In what other areas were we failing to see and hear people who didn't feel they belonged enough to use their voice?

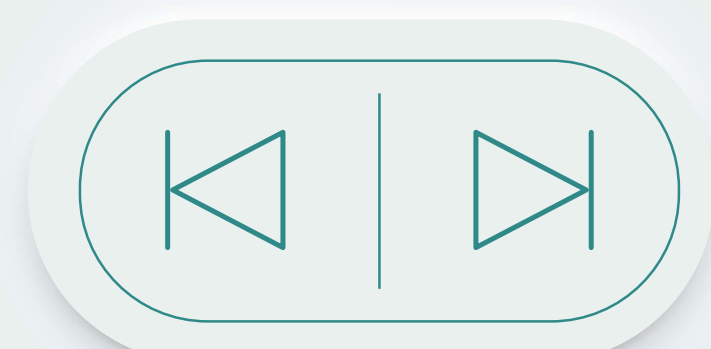
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One of our strategic priorities is to strengthen student voice. This year we have appointed prefects, student council members, house captains and eco-warriors. How much can our #MGSVoiceForGood campaign be used to empower our children to talk about and celebrate their heritage? Perhaps we can't yet tackle this because we don't know what our institution looks like from the outside? We don't know what the children see when they walk into the school and, if they don't see themselves represented in the curriculum, staff, posters or ethos, then our work must start there.

### November 2023

Hearing from Claire Stewart-Hall, who opened her thought-provoking session with her biography and the fact that she is "comfortable in chaos", immediately made us think about what navigating chaos really means, especially in the difficult space that has become race equity. For us, at a school where Geeta had been the fourth headteacher in as many years, Claire's words about how we enact and interpret policies resonated as we could clearly identify how different leaders used the language of the same policy in different ways.

We both experienced a level of surprise when we were reminded of the timeline of race equity issues since 1965, when racism was first recognised as a criminal offence in England. It can, at times, feel like we are continually trying to fix and solve deep-rooted issues, so it was refreshing to hear Claire talk about the fact that sometimes it's enough to observe and challenge when we see race inequity present itself.

Thinking about our call to interrupt racist narratives, we were forced to consider our own unconscious biases as some illuminating research was shared about how negative behaviours are more memorable when they are presented by the minority of a group than the majority. At school we have been developing a system of consequences that is based on a fresh start and "clean slate" for students when they return from suspensions or time out of a classroom. This made us both consider the extent to which children from minority groups truly get a fair experience when it comes to challenging their unproductive behaviours.

When we think about this in the context of media attention around the social contract with parents being broken, and more children being mental truants in schools, it feels all the more important that we give children a sense of belonging in school.

So yes, it does feel like the same fight and same conversations.

With this in mind, hearing from Sufian Sadiq was quite possibly the hardest part of the session. His personal lived experience was captivating, as were his delivery style and natural passion. However, when we looked back at our notes from his session, we both acknowledged that we had stopped writing. He was clear that he didn't want the impact of his talk to be masked behind policies and documents. It wasn't about ticking an extra box in our processes. This was quite simply about our very raw and emotional reaction to hearing the challenges he and his family have faced and still face.

Sufian's frustrations sparked some questions, and we were both lost for answers. But comfort came in the form of remembering Paul Miller's warning that it will feel in some moments that we are having the same conversations and preparing for the same fight. Here it was, the moment we were warned about. We reminded each other of Paul Miller's prediction that there would be times when the work just feels too hard, and it is during those times that we must remember our privilege and therefore our responsibility in this work.

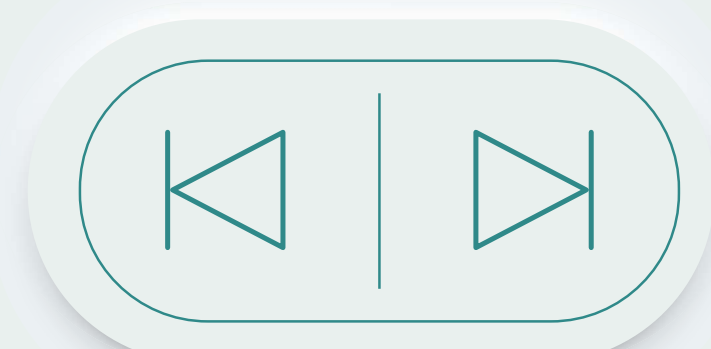
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In Shammi Rahman's talk we were reinvigorated by learning that her motivation and emotional determination in this work came from a place of knowledge and curriculum. She spoke about the role of religious education in our schools, which led us to question the extent to which our teachers are given the tools and expertise to use the curriculum to support discussions around prejudice and representation. How much do teachers in other subjects share this responsibility and the weight of instilling deep social change?

We reflected on the programme so far, and there was much we had learned and been inspired about. But, reflecting our school motto, we needed to take action. We visited the Bushey Primary Education Federation, which provoked some actions for us. It was clear to see that, in primary schools, children see their names as part of the learning environment. They hang their coats on named pegs and see their name in big letters on drawers, folders and displays. We lose this at secondary. The only guaranteed place that our children ever see their name is on their exercise book, taken out for an hour at a time and then hidden in their bag for the rest of the day. How can we make our students feel that they are a greater part of the school community? We are exploring with our form tutors a way of using the form notice board as an opportunity for each form to communicate its own identity.

Bushey Primary Education Federation is further ahead than Mount Grace in its journey in the use of visible displays for celebrating diversity and inclusion. It was striking to see a map of the world depict the different heritages of the students and staff in the school. During our visit we also reflected a lot on how we could make explicit the curriculum journey from primary school to secondary so that students in our feeder schools have a stronger idea of how their learning about the world will be developed long after they leave that school and come to us.

The highlight of the visit was listening to the student councillors talk about what they see and hear of racism. We reflected that we have never asked our students how and when they experience racism in our school or the extent to which they see their backgrounds represented in our curriculum. Together, our hub group identified some set questions we would ask our students in a survey so that we could compare responses and get an understanding of what student experience is like. We know from our data that the number of students receiving demerits for racist incidents has increased this term compared with the same period in previous years. Is there a real increase in incidents, or is there an increase in student and staff awareness and reporting of incidents?

## December 2023

So much of the next session resonated with us because it took us back to the fundamental principles of why we choose to work in education: to make a positive difference to young people's lives and to provide an education. We heard from Bennie Kara about the concept of *emotional tax*, which supported the changes we were making around fresh starts in lessons after behaviour has been challenged. The very idea that a student's sense of belonging and wellbeing can be depleted because of their need to be on guard is something that we quickly identified in particular individuals in our school. Maslow's hierarchy has long been part of leadership basics, but by beginning to understand the barriers to psychological safety and the emotional tax carried by some of our students as a result of their race, we could appreciate why they felt a loss of agency and didn't feel they were contributing positively at school.

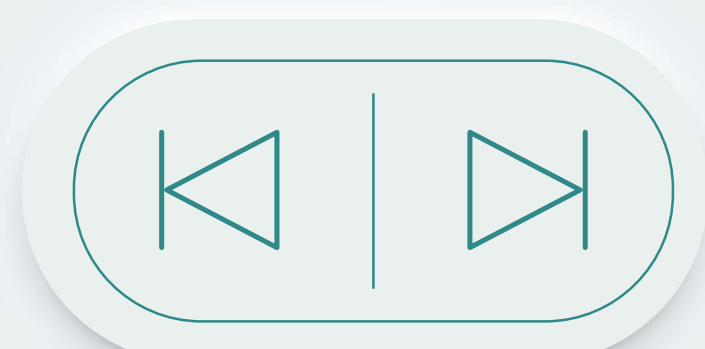
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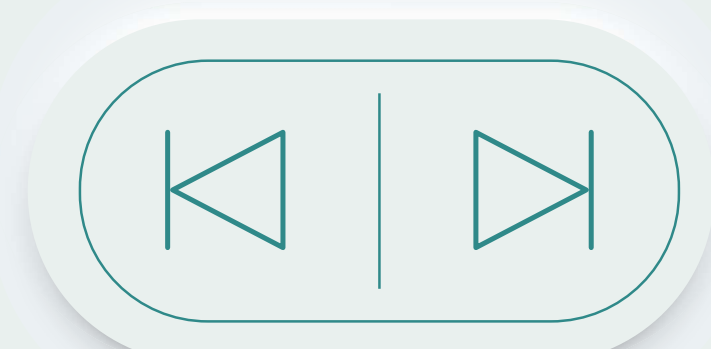
This thinking led us to reconsider the plans that were already underway for the members of our hub group to visit our school next month. We had scheduled a tour, meeting with curriculum leaders and having a discussion with the student council. What was noticeably missing was the opportunity to give voice to the students that were more likely to be paying the emotional tax. By the very fact of being on the school council, our councillors already had a sense of agency and voice.

We identified eight minority ethnic boys across year groups 7–11 who presented behaviour challenges, were underachieving and did not present as enjoying school or being proud to belong. We anticipated that having our hub members talk to them about their experiences of racism and race equity in both school and wider life might provoke some emotionally charged discussions. We decided that Geeta, as the headteacher, should not be in the room – we know that many students are keen to impress her, and we didn't want to skew the responses. We considered the value of student voice grouped by commonality rather than as a representative cross-section and wondered why we hadn't done this until now. What were our actions *usualising* for our young people? We looked forward to hearing what this voice would share in January.

Perhaps the starkest reflections from Bennie were about the victim narratives for non-White cultures that run through the curriculum and indeed ran through our recollections from our own schooling. When we remembered the assemblies and lessons we have personally delivered, telling stories of the struggles and resilience of people from minority communities challenging oppressive White invaders, the omission becomes overwhelming. Where are the narratives that are not founded on injustice and things going wrong, but instead show celebrations and achievements on the backdrop of security and equality? If the only time our children see themselves and their heritage represented in the curriculum is when the victim narratives are being told, then how are we really inspiring them and giving them something powerful to aspire to?

Geeta was in the middle of teaching Year 7 a unit on crime writing. In a lesson about Sherlock Holmes, where she was addressing the misconception that he was a real detective, she wondered how many of the children pictured a female Indian when they heard the word *detective*. They were soon introduced to Rajani Pandit, an Indian private investigator known as *Lady James Bond*. Geeta herself only recently learned of this woman's incredible achievements, and that was because she took the time and space to sit in the place of the student at the desk and consider what life narratives they were taking from the slides and resources they saw in front of them. It was a ten-minute intrusion on the scheme of work, which didn't contribute to any formal assessment, activity or homework. It was a simple narrative – a story that powerfully validated and did not victimise. As leaders, where do we allow our teachers to find this space and time for themselves to ensure that the stories of success shared with the students sufficiently represent them and make their own ambitions attainable?

The notion of multi-perspectivity was a key learning point from Bennie's session, and as leaders, we now recognise that the curriculum we are proud of might need some reviewing so that we can better understand what the dominant narratives are and the extent to which they need countering. This is not just for the wellbeing of our young people but also for the moral purpose of presenting the world as it is – rather than as it appears from one small island in Western Europe.

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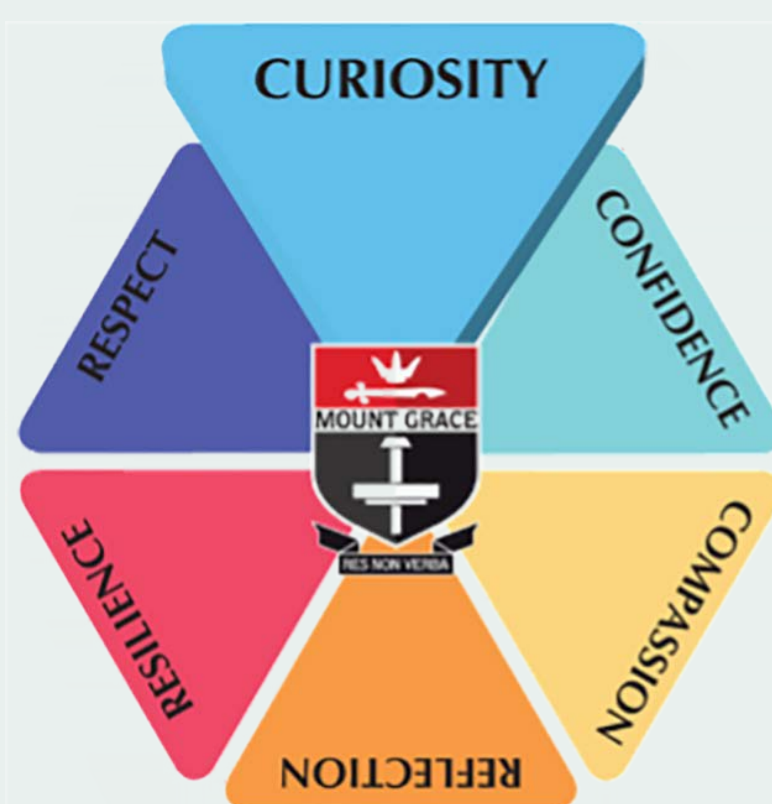


## January 2024

This month we hosted our hub group leaders for a visit to our school. The visit raised some questions we had not previously considered. We were expecting to see a wide range of behaviours across the school, as this was the narrative we were getting from both staff and students in recent weeks. But the tour showed the majority of the students meeting our high expectations and being great representatives of our community, which raised the questions: *Are we getting bogged down in the minutiae and dealing with a small group of disaffected students and missing the bigger picture for the majority? And, if that was the case, what other important issues are we losing sight of?*

Had we looked closely at who the disaffected children are, what their backgrounds were and, as Toks Olusamokun suggested in her talk during this month's session, were we *curious* enough? Curiosity is one of the Mount Grace School's six character virtues. Our previous work on race equity draws on our character virtues but usually from the angle of *compassion* or *respect*, but we found that a focus on the character virtue of *curiosity* could be exactly the insight and way in for our work to be more specific and drive sustainable, meaningful and deep change.

When we designed the character virtues logo, we didn't want to present any one virtue as more significant than another and hence designed it as a wheel that can move to match a focus. It's clearly time we modelled curiosity ourselves through the lens of race equity, and it's time to move the wheel of virtues logo to put curiosity on top!



The Mount Grace Character Virtues Wheel

Meeting with curriculum leaders was informative, as it allowed our primary colleagues to develop a greater understanding of how our secondary curriculum is designed and where we include different backgrounds and cultures. A lot of work had been done across the school to design a curriculum two miles wide and two inches thick, giving students access to a broad knowledge base that is relevant today. This has meant moving away from a more traditional English curriculum, that heavily features dead White men, towards a more inclusive focus on a variety of texts from different cultures, authors and backgrounds.

At Mount Grace School, religious studies is taught within the citizenship curriculum time; citizenship is a compulsory subject, and all students achieve a GCSE in citizenship. In these lessons, students are given the opportunity to study different religions and cultures as well as learn about their responsibilities as citizens. But despite these positive moves towards a more inclusive curriculum, have we really been successful? Considering the makeup of our staff, how can we plan for an inclusive curriculum if we don't know what we don't know? Asking the students themselves reminded us that our work is just beginning.

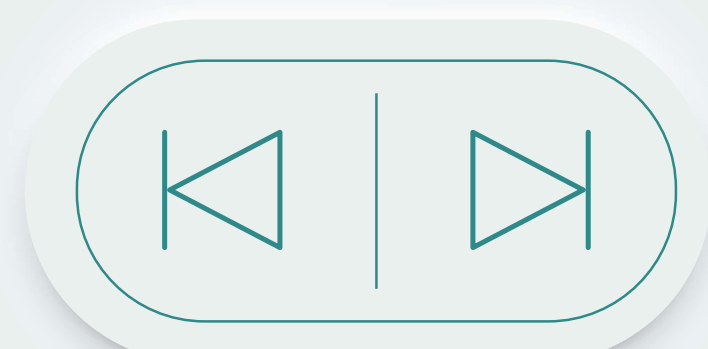
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The most interesting and valuable part of the visit came from the student voice discussions. Geeta left our visitors to sit in with the Student Council representatives and listened while the students, who had put themselves forward to take an active role in the school, discussed their experiences. However, it was the student voice with our specially selected disaffected BAME male students that was most illuminating. Geeta had met with them individually to tell them about the Great Representation programme and to allow them to opt out. It was made clear to the students that they could speak honestly, and it was decided that Hannah would attend this group to hear what they had to say. It was uncomfortable listening at times, particularly because the school leaders were all White women and did not have the lived experience that these young men did.

We acknowledged this and discussed with the students that we could not possibly know what they had experienced, but that we wanted to listen. They discussed how they are used to racist comments, both overt and more discreet, both in school and in the community. When asked if they had reported the incidents in school, the majority suggested that there was no point, because even if it had been dealt with, wouldn't change anything. They had *usualised* their experiences. Some felt that, while the school tried, they didn't always get it right. Others felt that they had reported some incidents, but they didn't feel listened to because the person they reported to didn't really "get it", or their response was "but it's not their fault", or they felt that the school didn't take any action.

It was humbling to sit and listen to these students talking honestly about their experiences. How could we fight against this apathy when perhaps it was our approach and ignorance that had caused it? We can't stand up for these students and give them a voice if we don't know what they're fighting on a daily basis and the emotional tax they are paying. How much had we missed because it hadn't been reported or dealt with in the right way? The discussion moved from racism to their aspirations, and the majority of those present said they intended to go to college and learn a trade. This led to some conflicting emotions for us as school leaders – pride that these young people wanted to train in an area that would guarantee them a future career and steady income, but disappointment that no one in the room had considered university.

Hannah felt that there was at least one student who was waiting for the voice of the others and that perhaps an aspiration for university was a private one that they were not ready to share. When we questioned them further, we found out that most of the students had no older relatives who had been to university. Interestingly, the only student who hesitated before replying and agreeing with his peers that he intended to learn a trade was also the only student who had a relation who had been to university; he was therefore likely to have a different insight into how he might belong in that world of academia and scholarship.

Following this visit, Geeta received a parental complaint via telephone from one mother about her son's involvement in the discussion. She questioned Geeta's decision-making in putting these boys in a room with all White leaders to talk about race equity, without speaking to parents first. The challenge was valid and one that Geeta accepted as an oversight, and the complaint ignited a powerful discussion around the shared goals and interests between this parent and the headteacher.

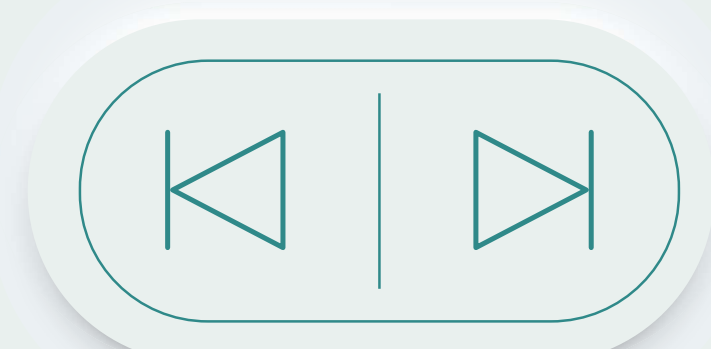
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It emerged during the discussion that this mother pronounced her son's name differently to the way that he is known and referred to by staff. Geeta asked the mother directly about the pronunciation, who shared that this mispronunciation was adopted from primary school. Geeta picked up on this in her presentation, "Pixelated Perspectives", to the whole Great Representation cohort. She challenged that if children as young as four can pronounce the name of every dinosaur that ever existed, we as adults can take the time to learn how to say the name of the children in our school correctly. We were both saddened that this child had never felt empowered to challenge staff about how they say his name or had chosen to accept it over time as the price of owning a lesser-known name.

We were privileged to hear from Professor David Gillborn, who reminded us that there is no scientific or physiological definition of race, and that race is a social construct, and yet we have become blind to the "colour of ability". The data on Black boys' achievement and behaviour are undeniable, even though the media narrative tends to draw on the underachievement of the White working class. We seem to have come back to our problematic ethnicity data in a different form. The self-labelling of *working class* is not the same as *free school meals*, and this is where the headlines deceive. We reflected on how now, halfway through the Great Representation programme, we needed to consider what knowledge from the programme we need to share with students or staff, or with both.

David spoke about how every decision-making point is a point of danger. He helped us reflect on how we might put habits in place to consider the race equity and inclusion agenda during senior team meetings, when we make the bigger decisions, but also how we train staff to consider this when they make small day-to-day decisions. We decided that we had to find the critical mass of energy to move our school forward in this race equity work. In David's words: "Counting within our own contexts is a good place to start."

Reflecting on September, when questions were raised about how the school's ethnicity data was collated – and what this might mean for how we *count* in the future – provoked a discussion on all counting related to race in school. Who, for example, looks at the number of racist incidents in school? Who decides on the follow-up actions/sanctions/education/repair? What is the school's line on how racism will be dealt with?

Toks Olusamokun in her talk raised the impetus for race equity work, by elevating it to the level of safeguarding. This drew on our learning from Bennie Kara back in December around emotional tax, but the reality of the risk to life is what made Toks's session so poignantly powerful. She shared the experiences of victims of racist bullying, and it was clear that they were on a par with what schools would normally count as ACEs (adverse childhood experiences). Where are we, as a school, joining the dots across the data on these micro- or macro-aggressions and taking actions to repair and safeguard?

In all of the thinking and learning, it seems that a sense of belonging is a reliable predictor of any impact on race equity work. However, when – as some of our students proved – race inequity is not called out, then is the real sense of belonging masked under an "acceptable" level of belonging? We added a question to our survey, which simply asks: Are you proud to belong to Mount Grace School? 30% stated Yes with 52% stating *Sometimes*. So what of the nearly one in five students who do not feel proud to belong? The next layer of our work will inevitably be around identifying these students and unpicking their reasons.

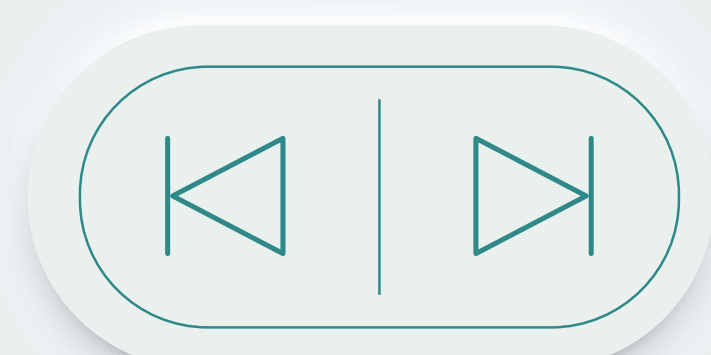
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In preparing for sharing her lived experience presentation to the cohort, Geeta considered the various stories from her life. In isolation, they might not seem particularly significant, but – putting them together into a clearer, *more pixelated* perspective – it is easy to understand how racially minoritised students might, over time, become desensitised to the inequity of their experiences to the point where they conclude there is no point in reporting racism because nothing can be done. We therefore owe it to our students to actively stop normalising and naturalising race inequity in schools. By doing this, we may stand a chance of bettering the world beyond the school gates for them too.

## February 2024

As we write this month's entry, the Michaela Community School, led by Katharine Birbalsingh, has been in the media for banning prayer rituals. On the surface, this decision appears anything but inclusive, and that was certainly the stance that some newspapers took. Further research showed that the decision was based largely around safeguarding students and upholding the school's values and ethos.

Looking behind the headlines, we knew that we had some work to do around the headlines we create within the school as leaders, and what impact these might have on students' sense of inclusion and belonging. Do we take enough time to explain our rationale through the lens of belonging and race equity? We asked our own students prior to this media story whether they would use a prayer room, and 11% said yes. The next step is to seek out answers on how that room would be used; and whether any of that 11% are seeking such an environment for needs other rather than religious purposes, in which case, what is lacking in the environment during socially unstructured times of day?

We reflected on the pressures facing school leaders to get running a school "right" – whatever that might look like to different people. The school curriculum always had elements that are considered contentious, and the current Israeli–Palestinian conflict illustrates well the need for sensitivity and care. Teachers have discussed conflicts and war in history and in citizenship classrooms for years, but it seems that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has caused teachers to be less confident about how to manage an acceptable narrative in the classroom. Our school was no exception and, even when using learning from this programme, we still faced a parent complaint.

It seems that the passage of time liberates discussion but that talking about current issues is fiendishly complex, yet so much of our work on race equity is about people's lived experiences in the here and now. This has sparked some thoughts for us about where we can use stories from history to create a safe space to explore narratives and experiences in all aspects of school life.

Remembering David's plea that we "count within our context", we wondered if the events of 7 October 2023 have impacted on the number of incidents of Islamophobia and antisemitism at school. The reality is, we don't know. We certainly don't feel it, but the system for reporting such incidents is currently masked within the umbrella term in our behaviour data as *racism*. Could we sub-group racist incidents so that we could easily see patterns and link them to what is happening in the community or the wider world at any given time? Our instinct suggests yes. After all, knowledge is power, and with more forensic knowledge and data, surely our actions will be more specific and tailored rather than tokenistic.

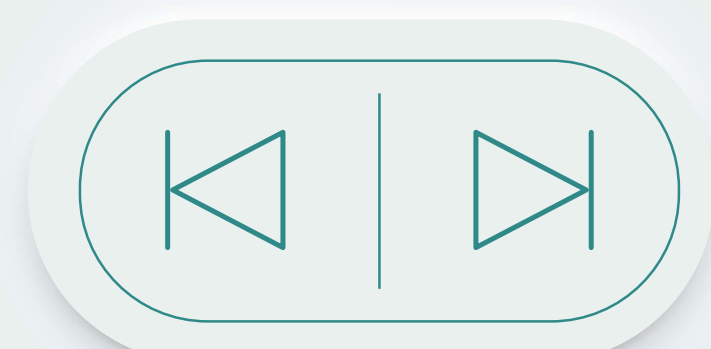
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Having both looked at the racist incidents that are currently logged on our recording system, it also became apparent that there was a need to establish what was considered racist and how these incidents would be logged. Currently, the follow-up actions may not be robust enough and are likely to have contributed to a culture where racist comments are not responded to as severely as other types of verbal abuse, or – worse – are masked under “inappropriate comment”. We needed to look at the language of our behaviour reporting as well as the behaviour policy itself to elevate the level of action being prompted as a result of behaviour/comments that compromise our work on belonging and race equity.

The learning from Ruth-Anne Lenga about antisemitism was very deep and powerful. It is an aspect of racism that we were not hugely confident in. As a teacher of German, Hannah had some experience of navigating related discussions, but Geeta’s experience was limited to discussing World War II and Hitler through literature texts. We know our citizenship curriculum covers antisemitism, although covers is not quite the right word. How can we possibly cover the complexities by suggesting units of work within the citizenship remit are enough?

We didn’t really appreciate that Jewish people only make up 0.5% of the UK population and 0.2% of the global population. We considered out of interest how the figure compares with our school, in which three students describe themselves as Jewish (0.6% of the school). Did we know who those three students were, without looking it up? We heard about the drills and additional safeguarding processes being adopted by Jewish faith schools and families. The Jewish children in our school will be hearing of these through their families and communities, and yet could we identify immediately who these three children were? Ashamedly, no.

### March 2024

It is difficult to believe that we were nearing the end of the programme by attending the March session, and yet this was going to be the start of our work. We were privileged to hear from Dal Babu OBE on his lived experiences, including his time as a senior Metropolitan Police chief. He spoke about the major influences on his life and how his actions to challenge racism resulted in him being seen as an outsider and, more concerningly, an extremist. It seems that supporting one view or action over another can leave us vulnerable to allegations of discrimination but, as he so powerfully reminded us, robust data will underpin our resilience and give us the strength to do the work that needs to be done.

This month we went to Harpenden Academy as part of our hub group visits. There, work on race equity is powerfully blended into the English curriculum and the library set-up, but the most powerful message that came from the children was in relation to kindness and welcoming children into their world, wherever they came from and whatever their background. A strong governor link for this work meant that leaders at all levels were owning the collective responsibility and priority that race equity needs. The school seemed more ahead in their work with parents too, and this made us consider Dal Babu’s talk, during which he challenged leaders to consider how well we know our parent body. What was their experience of school like, and how would this inform the attitudes they presented about their child’s learning, what they valued and what they prioritise now?

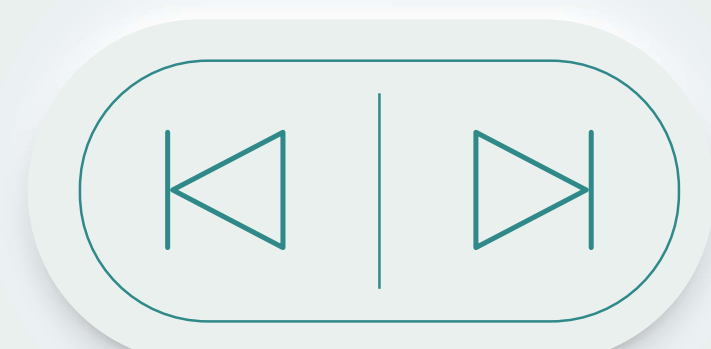
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Reflecting on the work we want to do, and the pace with which we want to do it and start seeing positive impact, left both of us feeling a little overwhelmed. Not only do we have to “point at the elephant”, we have to dissect and find a way to eat the elephant, one bite at a time. We need to adopt the Sir David Brailsford approach and find the marginal gains, to ensure that our work has impact on the individual child as well as on long-term, sustainable changes in our systems, policies and processes.

We have lots to implement in terms of externalising the internal feeling of being proud to belong. Aside from establishing the *count* correctly and going back to parents, children and staff on this, we want to work on our form base classrooms as a place where students start the day with a sense of belonging. This is something we noted that feels lost in the transition from primary school to the range of classrooms in which students learn at secondary school.

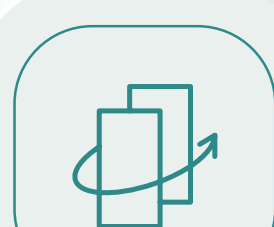
Our staff body is proudly diverse and, hearing the rich stories of the lived experiences of speakers on this programme, we must find a way of empowering our own staff in the same way. Being proud to belong needs to start with the adults in the school. Most importantly, we ourselves are proud that we have embraced this programme and started the conversation. We will look for where the conversations can be continued on all levels and in all roles in the school. We know we will continue to utilise the expert voices outside of our school too, but we are determined to use and model our #MGSVoiceForGood.

*Geeta Patel and Hannah Baker*

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# THE NOBEL SCHOOL

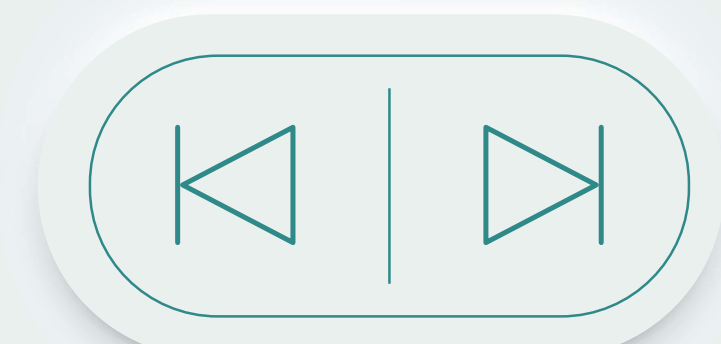
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## September 2023

The Nobel School is a comprehensive Foundation School situated in the Chells neighbourhood of Stevenage. There are 1,461 students on role, including 300 in the sixth form. Approximately 68.5% of the students are from a White British background. 6.2% are Black or Black British, 6% African, 6% from an Asian or Asian British background, and very small percentages of students are from other ethnic groups.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in June 2023. The first part of the report reads: “Pupils are proud to be ‘Nobelians’. They know they must strive to achieve their best, build their characters and care for their community.” Staff have worked hard over the last decade to develop and refine this concept of the Nobelian and what it means to be a Nobelian.

Our focus on character education and development, together with our Pivotal approach to behaviour management, seemed to be having the impact we had hoped for, and yet ...

Although we had spent, and continue to spend, time and effort on developing Nobel as a truly inclusive school, a couple of events led us to begin to question whether our students of colour, as Nobelian, felt the same sense of belonging and empowerment as others in our community.

he first occurred in the autumn term of 2022. The head of sixth form was approached by some of our Black African sixth form students, who wanted to run a cultural celebration event at lunchtime involving food, music and dress from different parts of Africa. This quickly broadened out to include Caribbean and Asian food, dress and music as other Black and minority ethnic (BAME) students came on board. The event was a huge success, well supported by sixth form students and staff, and visited by students in younger year groups. It has now become a regular feature of our school calendar, but it led us to ask why our students had wanted to organise this event, why it had taken so long for such a celebration to take place, and whether our younger BAME students feel the same way as those in Years 12 and 13.

In June 2023 Nobel held its first Pride event. This was an after-school event, which was well attended by students, staff and parents and will now take place annually. The event was student-planned, under the leadership of a talented member of staff, who worked hard to promote it amongst the whole Nobel community. This caused us to reflect again: Do our BAME students identify strongly as Nobelian and have the same sense of belonging as students with other protected characteristics, for example our LGBTQ+ students?

Participating in the Great Representation programme is a very important step on our path to becoming a genuinely inclusive school, where everyone can feel that they can identify as Nobelian. The first seminar provided us with a further opportunity to reflect on whether being a Nobelian means the same thing to our BAME students as to those from other groups. Professor Paul Miller’s session really encouraged us to consider where our BAME students see themselves represented in our school and how effectively we create a sense of belonging for everyone.

Hearing from Cynthia Rowe, the headteacher of How Wood School, about her lived experience as a child, adult and headteacher of mixed race was a powerful call to action. We are grateful for her honest and brave presentation of the challenges that her parents faced, that she has faced and that she still encounters in her professional and private life today.

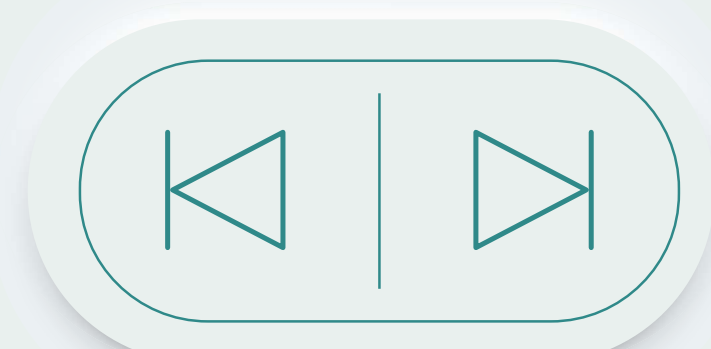
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After we had listened to the key speakers, it became apparent to us that our approach to this work would need three different strategies:

1. the quick gains – things that we could do immediately to improve some areas straight away
2. the medium-term actions that could be achieved this year but required a longer time frame than our quick wins
3. longer-term strategies that we needed to build into our school development plan moving forwards into 2024–5 and beyond

By the end of the day, an initial plan was beginning to take shape.

Our quick gains included looking at the way we word our job adverts to encourage a more diverse pool of applicants. There was some discussion around this during our first seminar. As a school we had already moved to anonymising applications before shortlisting to remove the possibility of unconscious bias, but this takes place only when someone has decided to apply. How can we encourage these applications to come from a more diverse pool of talent?

Back in school, the outline plan was shared with the rest of the senior leadership team (SLT) and a wider conversation was had around why this work is so important. Everyone has committed to proactively supporting this work as we move forward.

We have our first school visit taking place in mid-October, and we are looking forward to learning from and with the colleagues in our hub group before our second seminar in November.

### October 2023

We were delighted to head down to Potters Bar for our first school visit, at Pope Paul Catholic Primary School. On this visit we were struck by how clearly the children – even the very youngest – could explain what diversity means. We wondered if our older secondary-aged students would be able to articulate this so well! Each classroom included a map showing the countries that pupils came from, helping them all to appreciate that diversity is a positive thing and that children could come from many different backgrounds, but all could identify as Pope Paul pupils. We were fortunate to be visiting during One World Week so were able to see all of the classes participating in activities linked to the countries and cultures they were investigating as part of the week's special activities.

It was particularly valuable that our hosts were willing to share quite candidly the work that still needed to be done as well as their successes. It was interesting to hear that parental engagement in cultural events was much higher among Eastern European families than African or Asian families. This has made the leadership team realise that they will need to specifically encourage the latter to engage in future events.

The drive back to school gave us time to reflect on what we had seen and to begin to relate it to our own setting. A striking display in the school hall reminded pupils that they were diverse but equally valued and that all pupils belonged in the school. How could we create that same sense of belonging in a large secondary school? Where could we really set out our stall to make it clear to all Nobelians that we truly value and celebrate our diversity? If we could find a large, central space to use to create a celebrating diversity display, this could encourage conversation and discussion about what this means as well as signalling to new students and staff that everyone is welcome here. It didn't take long to identify the space, and plans are now afoot to create an equality and diversity display that we can involve students in refreshing throughout the year.

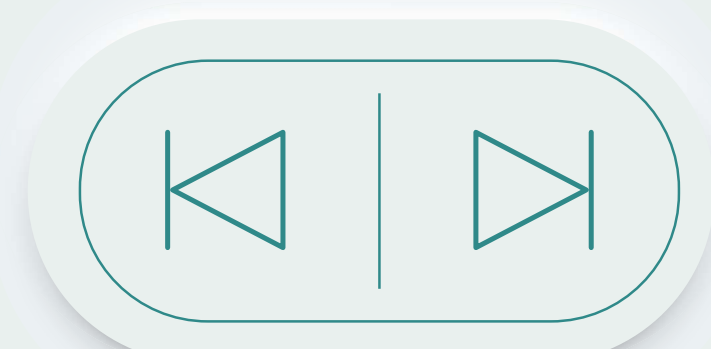
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Another key event that is worth mentioning occurred in October: the amazing cultural lunch organised by our sixth form students, bringing everyone together through food, music and dress from across Africa, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. So many students and staff attended, and it was a magnificent student-led celebration of diversity. The team that put this event together, we feel, could form the basis of our student-led Equality and Diversity Group, which we now plan to set up.

### November 2023

November began with our second seminar and a hard-hitting presentation from Sufian Sadiq from Chiltern Teaching School Hub. His very personal presentation was, at times, uncomfortable to hear and deeply upsetting, but at the same time it acted as a powerful clarion call to senior leaders to do more – to be the change that is needed in our schools and in our wider society. We came away from the day absolutely determined to ensure that participation in Great Representation brings about a lasting and positive change in our school.

In school we found ourselves referring back to the first seminar, in particular the challenge around how well all members of our community feel they belong. We began some work with student voice, using our autumn visit by our annual school effectiveness adviser (SEA) to look at our work through the lens of equity, diversity and inclusion. Our SEA met with a group of our sixth form students, who mentioned positive experiences such as celebrating Black History Month (BHM) and events like the cultural lunches. They also expressed an interest in planning similar events in the future.

Students emphasised the importance of promoting awareness and inclusion throughout the school year, not just at specific times like BHM. They highlighted areas where they felt we could be more proactive, such as acknowledging more widely different religious and cultural events. It was also clear from their discussions that we need to raise awareness of the work that goes on around dealing with racist and homophobic incidents and abuse. Not all students felt that these were dealt with effectively.

A group of staff was also spoken to by our SEA. We had asked for volunteers to discuss EDI themes with her; we felt that it was important to allow staff to self-select for this meeting. In the meeting some colleagues said that they feel that they have become the go-to person for race or LGBTQ+ issues for other staff and SLT. In Jeffrey Boakye's book *Black, Listed*, this common problem is recounted in the author's tales of his experiences in UK schools. We know it is not unique to Nobel, but we need to overcome it. We need to move to a position where everyone can engage in the conversation around EDI and there is a shared responsibility for this work to achieve the impact that we want.

The month has ended with a visit to Nobel from our hub partner schools. Paired up with sixth formers, we let our guests go where they wanted to go and invited them to ask our students about their experiences at Nobel. We also arranged for a Years 10 and 12 student panel to talk to them about EDI. Our visitors were struck by the pride our students showed in being Nobelians and the enthusiasm of our younger students to become more involved in the cultural events organised by our sixth form. It is always a great experience to see our school through someone else's eyes, and we are really looking forward to reading more of their reflections on the visit when we see everyone next week.

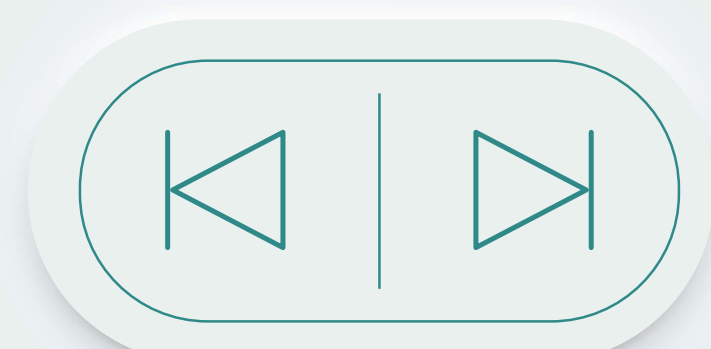
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When we began the Great Representation programme, we both felt a little wary of our White middle-class status and backgrounds. Are we really the right people to be leading on this? Two seminars in, and I think the answer is clear – yes, we are. If we do not lead this work, with our status and privilege, then how can the societal shift that we need ever come about?

### December 2023

The third seminar enabled us to focus on representation in our curriculum. The first speaker, Bennie Kara, posed the question: “Is diverse representation part of the daily diet of what your students receive, or is it wedged in or bolted on?” Across our school, we think the answer is probably a combination of both. There are some places in our curriculum where representation is relatively easy to achieve; and there are places where, if we are honest, lip service has been paid to it. Having spent the last four years completing a major overhaul of our curriculum at all key stages, the realisation that there is more to do creates a feeling of slight trepidation. How will our colleagues react to more curriculum work? How can we ensure that our middle leaders feel equipped and qualified to complete this work?

Bennie went on to remind us that what happens in a department can make or break diversity in the curriculum, and so it quickly became apparent to us that time and work will be needed to prepare our middle leaders for the task ahead.

We were inspired by Bennie’s call to make a curriculum that is beautiful because it makes things usual for everyone. Her reminder that curriculum is never finished was helpful. We need to keep working this into conversations with line managers, constantly feeding in adaptation. Bennie’s steer has provided us with the reassurance that our fantastic team of curriculum leaders will embrace this work and, as long as we give them the time and the space to learn and then lead change, they will make our curriculum truly beautiful, relevant to all our learners.

In the afternoon Melissa Lowry, the diversity and inclusion lead at Knebworth Primary School, asked us to consider her lived experiences and whether they are shared by some of the students in our schools. Her brave and frank account of some of the comments and situations she has endured was, at times, upsetting and difficult to listen to. It is essential, though, that we do hear accounts such as Melissa’s in order to understand the nature of the problem and to begin to develop strategies to educate and inform colleagues and students to make such experiences a thing of the past.

Back in school, we have been planning for the unconscious bias training for staff that we will be having in mid-January. This is an essential element of our strategy to become a genuinely inclusive school and will become part of the new staff induction programme moving forward, so that all colleagues receive this training.

### January 2024

Our first school visit of 2024 was to Leverstock Green Church of England Primary School. We received a lovely, warm welcome and were struck by the confident way in which the pupils engaged with their visitors, conveying a real sense of pride in their school. After our tours, we were given the opportunity to talk with a group of Year 6 pupils, who were very keen to tell us all about their school. They offered opinions on every aspect of school life.

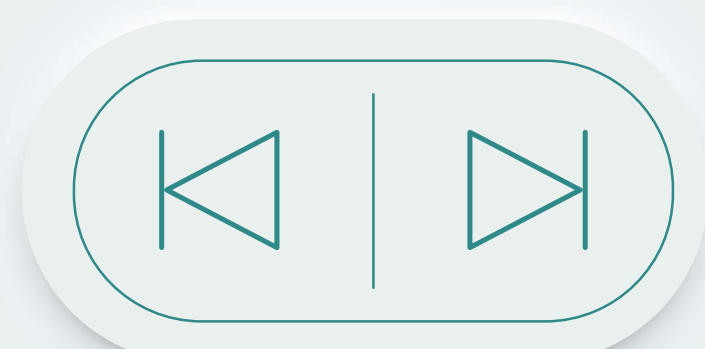
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We had seen the *I-Space* areas in each classroom – small displays that pupils are able to use to reflect, be still and reset when needed. It was great to hear from the Year 6 pupils how much they appreciate the time and opportunity to reflect that they are given, both inside their classrooms and in the whole-school *I-Space* out in the corridor. It led us to reflect on our busy, bustling secondary school and where and when any of our students might find that space in which to be still and reflect. It will be an interesting question to put to our student council.

When asked to sum up the best thing about Leverstock Green, the children, unprompted, told us that it is that “We’re all different”. This left us with an overwhelming sense of Leverstock Green as a cohesive school community, where children are valued and encouraged to value others in return.

Unfortunately, January did not go quite according to plan for Nobel. A crisis with our water supply kept us both away from the next face-to-face training day, and we really missed that opportunity to reflect and discuss together with our hub group colleagues.

The end of January saw Rachel Macfarlane, HFL Education’s lead adviser for underserved learners, visit Nobel to deliver the Unconscious Bias training that we had arranged earlier in the year. Whilst we very much wanted to do this, the session did cause us some anxiety. Would it be a bit like ripping the plaster off the wound? What if we created more divisions and anxiety amongst colleagues rather than bringing them together?

Holding the training was clearly the right thing to do, but without being able to control the outcomes, it did feel a little bit like leaping into the void. Rachel expertly guided us through considering the experience of people of colour in our schools and what this means for us as educators, reflecting on our own experience of racism, and considering our current practice before we moved on to think about our next steps. We were grateful to the colleagues who shared their experiences, helping to open up the conversation in the room and facilitating a really honest and open discussion.

This 90-minute session has been just the first step on a journey we are undertaking together as colleagues. It shone a clear light onto an issue that is too often avoided in schools, compounding the problem in our wider society. Speaking to colleagues afterwards, it was clear that many felt relieved that this was now being discussed openly. They were also optimistic that we can make a genuine change to the experience of our racially minoritised students and colleagues as this work gathers momentum.

Our next step is to develop a time-limited working party to bring forward recommendations for how we continue to tackle racism as a community. We need to call on the experiences and skills of a wide range of colleagues, and we firmly believe that we will get stronger and more diverse voices willing to participate in the working party because we have had the courage to take this first step and begin talking about racism and the journey to racial equity at Nobel.

### February 2024

It seems incredible that we are already at our penultimate seminar; time has flown by so quickly. Hearing from Ruth-Anne Lenga, associate professor and programme director at UCL’s Centre for Holocaust Education, about the recent rise in antisemitism was a potent reminder of the importance of our work on race equity in schools.

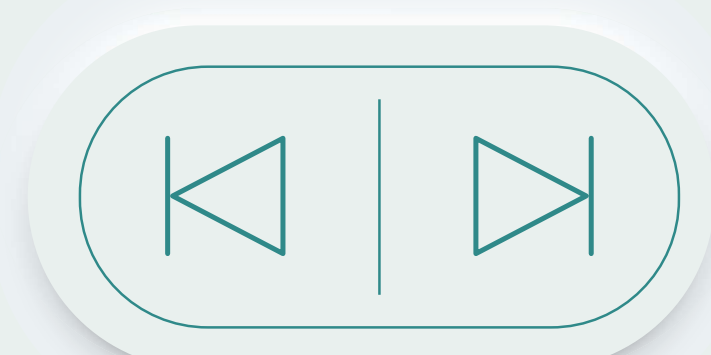
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Ruth-Anne provided a set of questions to consider when working with scenarios in school. This is proving to be a very helpful way of approaching an incident where bias, prejudice or overt racism may be a factor. These questions encourage us to take a step back and reflect before embarking on a course of action, thus enabling us to ultimately achieve a better resolution, even when our instinct is to jump right in.

Penny Rabiger's excellent session on "Creating the Anti-racist School" gave us room to consider how to embed our work on race equity into our school improvement plan, from the work of governance, through our curriculum, and out into working with our parents and wider school community. We began to think about the work of each member of our senior team and how work on race equity can run as a golden thread through all of these roles and responsibilities. As a result, we are excited to start writing our next school improvement plan!

It was fantastic to hear from staff and pupils at Margaret Wix School as they showed us what an impact being part of the Great Representation programme last year has had on their school and community. The children spoke with such obvious pride about their school and what makes it so special. We were challenged by this to aim to have our own student voice results next summer reflect such a positive recognition of equity, diversity and inclusion. It was encouraging to hear that not everything has happened overnight and that their approach is still evolving.

Rebecca Woode, headteacher at Woodlands School, spoke to us with such honesty and courage about her experiences and emotions in the months and years following the murder of George Floyd. She encouraged us all to remember that a setback does not erase our progress. This is the message that we travelled back to school with – that working successfully to promote race equity and inclusion is not a linear journey; there will be lots of setbacks along the way, but these will not erase the progress we have made.

### March 2024

We made our final hub school visit to Hillshott Infant School and Nursery in Letchworth Garden City. We were able to visit Reception and Year 2 classes as they participated in their No Outsiders weekly assemblies. Both groups were considering the same material, and it was interesting to see how this was adapted for the different ages of the children.

This programme, devised by Andrew Moffat, aims to deliver inclusive education to empower children to become effective global citizens. What we saw was certainly very powerful, especially the way that the Reception children repeated the mantra that there were no outsiders in their school, and that they showed such empathy for the person in the picture they were considering. This is clearly a well-embedded routine in the school, and we were left thinking that if all primary schools engaged with a programme like this, how easy it would be for us to reference it with students from day one of Year 7, building on this powerful work and enhancing the sense of an inclusive community in secondary schools.

Meeting with the deputy headteacher with responsibility for the curriculum, and the Early Years lead, we heard about how the school had reviewed its curriculum to improve inclusivity and diversity. This started with looking at the books the children read and then spread throughout the entire curriculum, considering the artists that they used for inspiration, the countries studied in geography, and the key figures studied in history.

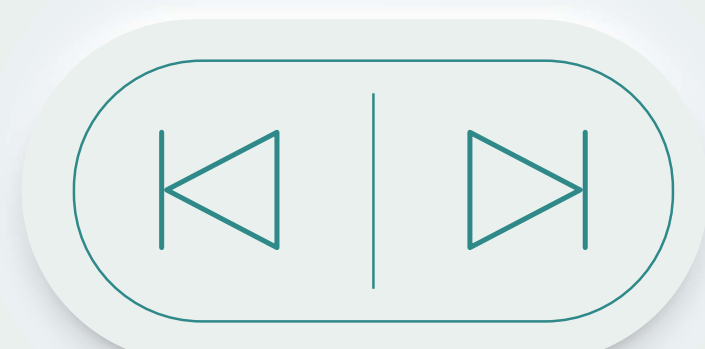
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This process had been kickstarted by a powerful INSET session from Aisha Thomas, author of *Representation Matters*. After the training, subject leads had been given the time and resources to really consider the implications for the curriculum in their subject areas. It is clear to us that if we are to achieve the same level of representation within our curriculum, subject leads will need training, support and time to complete this work.

Our tour enabled us to see that the No Outsiders message was strong throughout the school, from the choices of books and representation in resources, to the displays on the classroom and corridor walls. The deputy head had talked about the pupil voice activity that she carried out at the start of the project, during which one pupil had said that she saw people like her in the books she had at home but not in the books she read in school. It is evident that the school has really taken this feedback to heart to ensure that all of its pupils are represented in the resources that it uses.

We are now at the end of the Great Representation programme but still only at the beginning of our equity, diversity and inclusion journey. When we began, back in September, EDI issues were very much the elephant in the room. Through the confidence gained on this programme, we have brought these issues out into the open and have begun to tackle them.

There is no quick fix, and we expect to have EDI as a key feature of our school development plan for years to come. We have learned as a staff not to be afraid to have conversations around race equity, and we are learning to be more aware of the biases that we all carry with us, the impact that these can have on other members of our community, and to adjust our approaches accordingly. Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said that there is only one way to eat an elephant: one bite at a time. Yes, we still have a long way to go, but we have taken those first bites, and the rest of the elephant will follow.

*Naomi Rose and Martyn Henson*

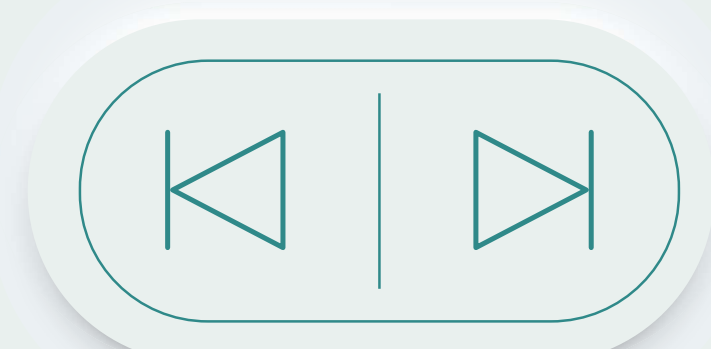
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# OAKLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

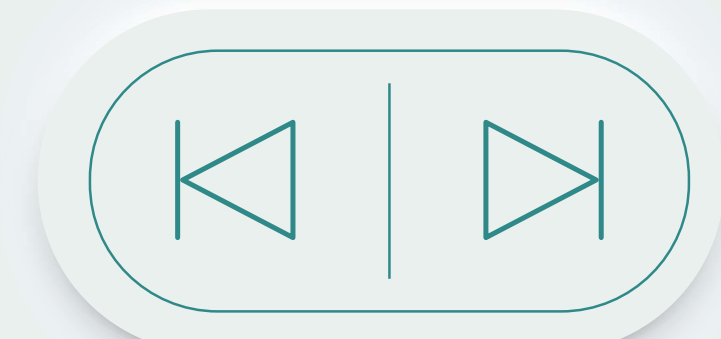
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## September 2023

Oaklands is a one-form-entry primary school with 193 pupils on roll at the time of writing. 17.5% of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). 6% have education, health and care plans (EHCPs), with another three EHCP plans pending. 140 pupils identify as White British. The next largest demographic group identify as Indian – 16 pupils (8%). Six children identify as White and Asian, six as White and Black Caribbean, and one child identifies as Black African. All members of our senior leadership team (SLT) identify as White British, and there are no people of colour on our full governing body (FGB).

Race equity at Oaklands is currently by default rather than design. Due to the need to implement a sequenced and ambitious curriculum quickly, following the headteacher's appointment, the focus was not on race equity, but on considering whether the chosen scheme (Cornerstones) met the requirements of Ofsted. Following the implementation of Cornerstones, audits have shown that it is representative of minoritised groups. This was reflected in the school's Herts County Council (HCC) commissioned school visit (CSV) in December 2022, which states:

It was evident from the Cornerstones Education knowledge organiser that pupils would be moving on to learning about Black Britons, which includes significant females such as Claudia Jones and Olive Morris. TO (race equality adviser) felt that this work was comprehensive.

In our literacy curriculum we have carefully and deliberately chosen texts that represent the diversity of society in the UK. Examples include: *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly, *The Island* by Armin Greder, *Grandad's Camper* by Harry Woodgate and *The Barnabus Project* by The Fan Brothers.

Our children are kind, respectful and open-minded towards each other. However, as leaders our next step is to audit our personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum to find out whether race equity is explicitly addressed. We also want to identify key religious or cultural celebrations that members of our school community engage in, and build these into our school calendar of events.

Although children identifying as non-White British at Oaklands are small in number, as leaders we will look at their attainment and progress data to see if they are performing in line with national trends. We are conscious that, because the proportion of these pupils is relatively small and spread across year groups and demographics, we may not have monitored this carefully enough in the past.

Our vision is for there to be clarity of understanding amongst the whole school community regarding the importance of race equity.

## October 2023

Below are our separate reflections on the first Great Representation seminar.

I came to Herts for my first headship, having spent the entirety of my career in North London, in Barnet and Haringey. The demographics of these boroughs were far more mixed than in my current school.

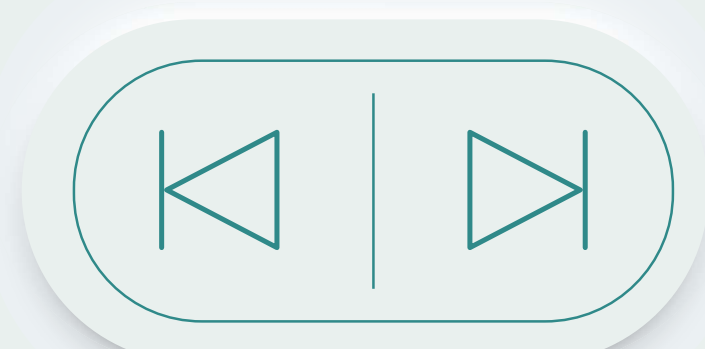
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In the later years of my time in Haringey, there was a sharp focus on schools learning about and understanding unconscious bias, with a particular emphasis on how it was affecting Black children in the borough. This led me to reading more widely around the problem and developing my own understanding of it; at times this was very uncomfortable as it forced me to confront some of my own views and previous actions in a different light.

My personal challenge has been knowing how far and how quickly to address the above at Oaklands, where many staff do not see racism or unconscious bias to be a problem. Although much of the information shared at the first Great Representation session did not come as a surprise to me, the day reaffirmed my desire to affect positive change in my school's culture and curriculum.

– **Tom (headteacher)**

I attended the first Great Representation seminar a little unsure of what to expect, having never taken part in a project like this before. What stayed with me the most was the data presented to us at the start of the day – the evidence of systemic race inequality in the UK.

Professor Paul Miller's words about how education can be a "social vaccine" to racism, and how schools have the power to help change the society of the future, made me feel empowered that we could make a difference through our curriculum and the experiences we offer the children at Oaklands.

The challenge I feel that we face in the coming months is to ensure that any change we make is embedded within our school culture and not just a tokenistic approach.

– **Steph (deputy headteacher)**

October also saw our first school visit, to Parmiter's School. This enabled us to see how our secondary colleagues approached race equity. Parmiter's are much further along in their journey and have made significant inroads with stakeholders. Subject departments, particularly history, have adapted and delivered curriculum content to reflect the diversity within the school and society. There are strong links between pupils and school leaders, where both parties listen to the other's views, allowing for meaningful change to take place at a realistic and sustainable pace. Speaking with sixth form pupils, who were part of the Equalities Committee, showed the value of engaging meaningfully with pupil voice. It also highlighted those pupils' experiences of a lack of representation during their primary school education – something that resonated with us as primary leaders. It was clear that key staff were instrumental in leading change and supporting both pupils and colleagues in making this a success.

Our next step is to analyse attainment data for the autumn term, with a focus on minority groups. This will clarify our priorities as we move through the programme, ensuring that there is a tight focus on implementing effective change.

**November 2023**

Having been inspired and emboldened by the first Great Representation seminar, we attended Seminar 2 with a sense of excited anticipation for what lay ahead. What

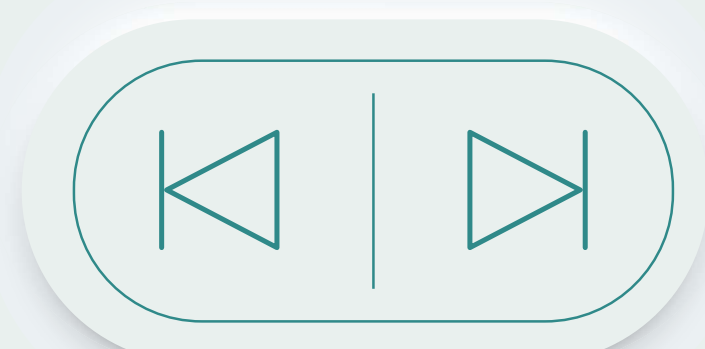
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would we learn this time? What information would be imparted that we could take away with us, eager to share in our desire to enact positive change?

What transpired was not what we expected.

We began the day with no idea that, later that morning, we would be privileged to experience the most emotional, thought-provoking and raw of presentations: “Racial Equity: A Walk in My Shoes”, from Sufian Sadiq, director of the Teaching School at the Chiltern Learning Trust.

Sufian had us gripped from the outset with his unique delivery and timing. His achievements in the field of race equity are impressive, as are the contributions he makes to his wider community, taking in all races and creeds through the many leadership roles he holds across varied institutions. His humorous delivery in the first minutes of the presentation belied what was to come.

As Sufian recounted his story, the reality of his lived experience became challenging to process. His experiences of racism, directed at him and his family, happened with disturbing regularity. Whether the racism was overt or unintended (but racism nonetheless), it was plain that it is a part of his everyday life; something that he has come to accept as normal. That he continues to give so prolifically to a society in which he is ill-treated by so many is nothing short of remarkable. Watching Sufian conclude that his experiences have taught him that it is simply not possible for things to change was a difficult moment. However, it also provided an opportunity for us to return to school, process what we had seen and heard, and re-evaluate our priorities.

We will still focus on minority groups when looking at in-school data in December and compare it with national trends. However, we felt the need to do something more tangible, and sooner. We wanted an easy win – a way to show that all of our children belong at Oaklands, in an effort to provide those from minority backgrounds with positive experiences to fall back on when they inevitably face racism and bigotry in the future, to know that they do have allies and friends from across society who do not see them as *other*.

We had already planned to create a calendar of significant events, reflecting the different backgrounds of our pupils, and Diwali was the perfect festival with which to begin making inroads, as many of our pupils would be celebrating it. The school’s religious education (RE) leader agreed to carry out an assembly on Diwali. As this was being arranged at short notice, we wanted something with a visually high impact, without adding significantly to workload. The RE lead engaged with Hindu and Sikh children and their families, asking them to come to school dressed in their traditional clothing, worn when celebrating Diwali.

One particular child from a Hindu family, with a history of displaying behaviour that challenges, was offered the opportunity to take part in the assembly. Although he declined, he was able to contribute through describing his experiences of Diwali to the RE lead. He also attended the assembly as part of the audience in traditional attire.

The RE lead also drew on the knowledge of a Hindu teaching assistant (TA) to ensure accurate information was delivered, as well as correct pronunciation of key vocabulary. The TA became involved in the planning of the assembly, brought in artefacts from home and produced a presentation of photographs to refer to during the assembly from her own family’s celebrations. She spoke afterwards of how she felt valued being asked for help and what it meant for her to see lots of children in

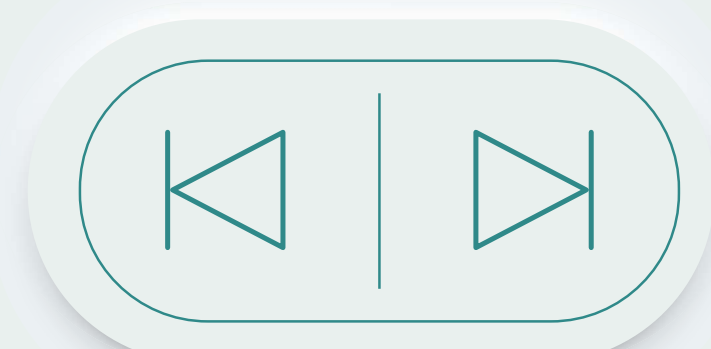
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their traditional clothing in assembly. We reflected that if an adult feels that way, then it stands to reason that the children will have had similar reactions and feelings when experiencing their culture and heritage being showcased to the whole school.

Following on from our experience at Seminar 2, we are focusing on opportunities to celebrate and learn about the cultures and backgrounds of children from different minority groups in our school. Sadly, we tend to agree that there will always be racism and sections of society who partake actively, passively or unconsciously in it. This makes us more determined to teach ourselves, our staff, our children and our families about the importance of diversity in society and to embrace difference, rather than seeing it as a threat or something to be afraid of.

Although we believe the Diwali assembly to have been a success, we also believe that if we are more deliberate and focused on doing something similar in the future for other groups within the school, then the quality can be greatly improved and move beyond an assembly. The potential to engage with the community is clear, and the benefits could be far-reaching.

### January 2024

Following assessments at the end of term, data analysis included a focus on the attainment of children from ethnic minorities. The main group we focused on was Indian, as this is our second largest demographic by ethnicity. Other ethnicities represented within the school are in such small numbers as to be statistically insignificant; however, we ensured that conversations around those pupils were included in the agenda for pupil progress meeting.

The data for our Indian pupils shows a significant proportion are working at least at age-related expectations, and many above, across all subjects in comparison with White British peers:

	Reading			Writing				Maths			
<b>White British</b>	Pre 5.9%	EXS 61%	GDS 13.2%	Pre 6.6%	WTS 24.3%	EXS 64.7%	GDS 4.4%	Pre 3.7%	WTS 19.1%	EXS 62.5%	GDS 14%
<b>Indian</b>	Pre 0%	EXS 72.7%	GDS 27.3%	Pre 0%	WTS 18.2%	EXS 72.7%	GDS 9.1%	Pre 0%	WTS 0%	EXS 72.7%	GDS 27.3

Despite the positive attainment demonstrated here, what we have taken from the Great Representation programme is that education is about so much more than academic success. High attainment undoubtedly opens doors and provides opportunities, but we want our pupils' experiences of school to go deeper than that, exposing them to new ideas and ways of thinking, whilst also identifying and acting on opportunities for them to see themselves reflected in school life.

Following on from the success of the school's Diwali assembly in November 2023, we have continued to use assemblies as a lever to discuss and promote diversity in school and in our wider society. We have delivered assemblies on Martin Luther King Day (15 January) and have also considered other minority groups within the school. For example, we have two children who wear hearing aids, and we have invited pupils from a local secondary school for deaf pupils to visit and deliver an assembly on what it is like to be deaf.

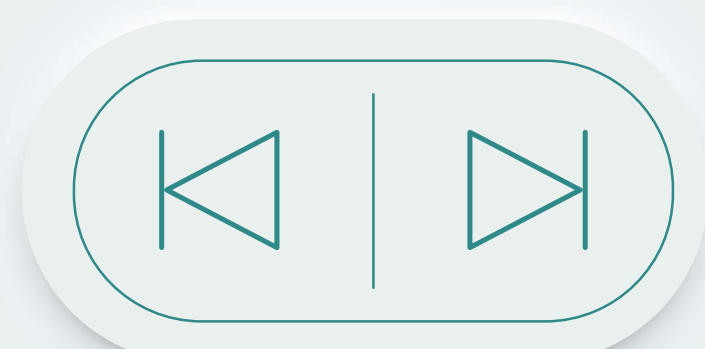
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As leaders we continue to reflect on the next steps for our school. As previously mentioned, staff have endured considerable change over the last two academic years, and we are mindful of fulfilling our pledge to them that we would not be introducing any significant new initiatives. We are in the fortunate position whereby our chosen curriculum (Cornerstones) promotes diversity and introduces children to concepts that lead to deeper thinking and understanding. This, coupled with deliberately selected texts in English, which promote diversity and discussion around topics such as immigration, means that children and staff at Oaklands are accessing material that challenges stereotypes and promotes inclusion and kindness.

What is clear to us is the importance of leadership in this process. The Great Representation seminars and wider reading we have undertaken underline the power we have to influence and support our school community. Lessons learned through participation in the Great Representation programme are now always considered when making decisions as a leadership team, e.g. What does this look and feel like for our minority groups? Is there any unconscious bias present in our decision making? Why this, why now?

### March 2024

As our cohort enters the final stages of participation in the Great Representation programme, we have taken time to reflect on its impact at Oaklands Primary School. As described throughout this reflective journal, staff at the school have experienced significant amounts of change over the last two years, and we had to be mindful of this in any decisions we made. Because of this, the learning has remained very much with the head and deputy, with the intention of trickling down information and changes.

Successes have been:

- the improvement in the cycle of assemblies celebrating the beliefs and cultures of children in our school
- a sharper focus on all minoritised groups

We have audited our curriculum, including PSHE, to ensure that diversity is present within it. We can say with confidence that our approach to race equity is now by design rather than our original position, where it was by default.

Throughout the process, the visits to other schools in our cohort have been invaluable. We are all at different stages of development, and we all have different school priorities; however, being able to discuss our contexts in a safe and supportive group environment has been hugely impactful.

Oaklands hosted the final school visit this month, and this provided us with an opportunity to reflect on our progress. Although we have not tackled addressing race equity in the same way as some other settings, such as holding parent meetings, we have made strides in making all pupils feel that they belong at Oaklands. Rather than approaching the topic head-on, we have woven race equity into our staff meetings, our pupil progress meetings and our curriculum.

Staff are talking positively about the quality of the texts the children are accessing and the learning they are also taking from them. A particular example would be Year 6 studying the book *Stonewall: A Building. An Uprising. A Revolution* by Rob Sanders, which allows young readers to discover the rich and dynamic history of the Stonewall Inn and its role in the gay civil rights movement. Although not about race,

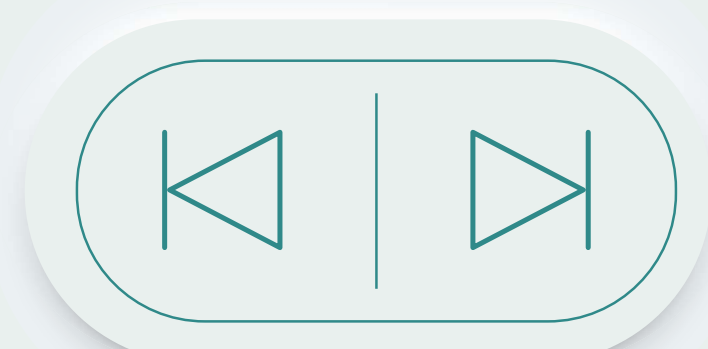
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the theme of activism and equity runs throughout the text. This allowed the teacher to challenge the thinking of some of the children in the class, who had been using the term gay as an insult.

Children and staff are being taken on a journey of discovery, and it may well be the case that in future we choose to approach race equity in a more overt manner. At times, it has felt to us as though we have avoided some of the potentially challenging conversations and responses by choosing the approach we have. However, we felt it was important for our staff to be taken on this journey in a gentler way, with the potential to now open up debates around curriculum choices, events happening in our society and further afield. There has been a subtle shift in the culture of the school, with RE assemblies opening the door to conversations that may not have happened in the past; staff are genuinely interested in their colleagues' lives and beliefs.

There is still work to do. Oaklands could be described as something of a safe bubble for its pupils and staff. This was evident during a pupil voice session when Oaklands hosted a school visit, where one Year 5 pupil, of Indian background, said "There's never any racism here. There's no racism in England." We all know this is sadly not the case, and we will continue to educate and support our pupils in understanding this, as well as giving them knowledge and tools to stand up to racism and inequality.

The boy in question also commented, "We've learned that it's not only White people who do great things." This heartened us and brought us back to what we wanted to achieve – to have a school where all children feel they belong.

We have decided that in the summer term, we are going to use the book *Change Sings* by Amanda Gorman as a whole-school writing focus. This book celebrates the importance of equity within our society, and we feel its message represents how we want children – and staff – at Oaklands to feel. We want to empower our children to be the change that they want to see in the world. While we are aware there is still a long way to go, we hope that we have begun to inspire future generations to make a difference. This is best represented by the final page of *Change Sings*, which reads:

We are the waves starting to spring,

For we are the change we sing.

We're what the world is becoming,

And we know it won't be long.

We all hear change strumming.

Won't you sing along?

*Tom Hassan and Steph Morgan*

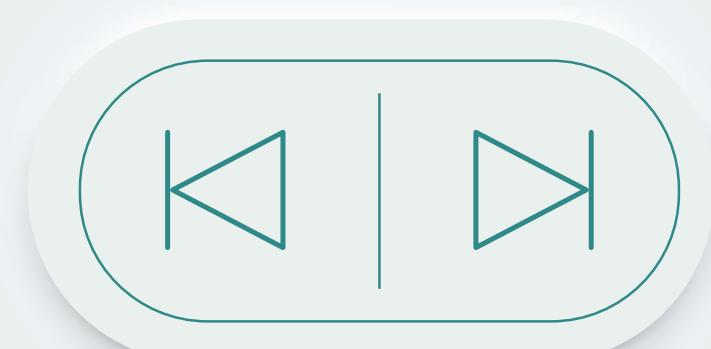
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# PARMITER'S SCHOOL

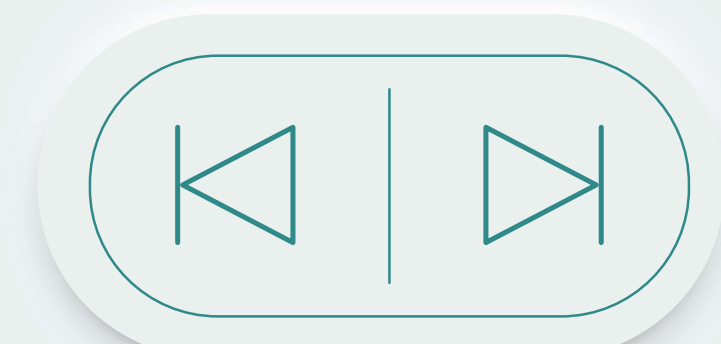
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## September 2023

The first session opened with a useful opportunity to reflect on the purpose behind the Great Representation programme and the statistical evidence nationwide for the need to address systemic race inequity. This would be a useful exercise to conduct back at school, as we analyse both our academic outcomes this summer and last academic year's conduct and attendance data to map where Parmiter's sits in relation to the national picture.

We embarked on the programme with a view to sharing the work undertaken as part of our equalities and diversity initiatives (in response to the aftermath of the George Floyd murder in the US in 2020) and learning from other schools, professionals and institutions how they are attempting to address systemic race inequity within school settings. A one-page document giving the context of our school, as well as our motivation for joining the programme, was shared with our hub partner schools: Hollybush, Wood End and Oaklands.

Professor Paul Miller's session provided a useful breakdown both of the main types of racism and the three contexts: regulatory, social and institutional. The presentation led to key questions worth exploring in the context of Parmiter's School:

- **Recruitment and career development for BAME staff.** How do we promote Parmiter's as a place where BAME staff would want to work, and where they would feel confident that their career would thrive? How do our current BAME staff feel about their career prospects at our school? Within the context of our lead school role in the Watford Partnership for Teacher Training, is there more we could do to make our partnership more attractive for BAME candidates looking to apply for ITT positions?
- **Greater engagement from BAME parents and carers in the work of the parents' association and the governing body.** How can we encourage greater participation and engagement with events, surveys and consultation as well as with committee membership?

The key message from Paul about creating a sense of belonging within the BAME community resonated. A review of our branding, website and communications could be helpful to explore how it could assist in enhancing engagement with BAME stakeholders and potential applicants.

Cynthia Rowe's presentation gave very heartfelt and personal evidence of the impact of allowing racist behaviours and contexts to go unchallenged. It also made it crystal-clear that racism is very much a threat that needs to be challenged in all our schools.

At the end of the session, we invited the participants from our hub schools to visit Parmiter's on Wednesday 18 October. We will draw up a programme with opportunities to meet BAME students who have been engaged with our Equalities work so far, as well as staff engaged in our equalities working party and our ongoing curriculum reviews.

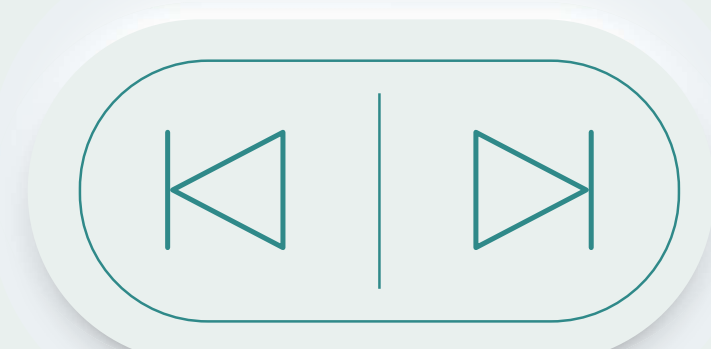
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## October 2023

At the second meeting of the Herts EDI Networking Group, schools shared experiences regarding students with protected characteristics and the challenges that can be associated. It is clear that government guidance is desperately needed, but there are still concerns regarding informing parents and the possible safeguarding implications. Schools also shared their journey with EDI – the challenges and how these were tackled.

Conversations took place regarding schools' approaches to Black History Month and the issue of tokenism were very interesting, as were the general discussions about intersectionality and privilege. Some schools have achieved various levels of the EqualTeach Award, which is something Parmiter's will be looking at in the future. Policy documents were also shared at the meeting. The Prejudice-related Incident Report Form was very interesting and is certainly something we can incorporate into our practice.

Our hub school colleagues visited Parmiter's to meet some key staff and students who have been actively involved in student voice over the last few years. In preparation for this and to give context to the visit, we shared a series of Google Slides presentations that contained information from training sessions over the past two years.

Our visitors were provided with a tour of the school, giving the opportunity for them to see lessons in action and some of the resources we have adapted in the light of our work on EDI across the curriculum. They heard firsthand accounts of life as a student at Parmiter's. We took particular pleasure from both the openness of our students and the comments made by our guests regarding the students' independence and how engaged they are.

Our guests also met and questioned staff who had been engaged in either curriculum development work or our staff equalities working party. Colleagues provided resources and curriculum outlines from history, personal development, maths and art. They shared their experiences about staff and student engagement with the working parties and about the creation/evolution of our "Languages booklet".

Finally, five sixth form students shared their experiences of both engagement in our student voice Equalities Committee and their experiences of being a BAME student at both primary and secondary school. From this session it was clear how vital it is to empower students through valuing their voice and contribution to decision making. This is critical to ensuring these students feel a close attachment and sense of belonging in school. There was one very moving response from a student, when they were asked about what leaders in primary schools could do to ensure this sense of belonging in the early years of schooling, with the student pointing out that the quietest children can often be the most impacted. An example was given of a student who chose to simplify their name throughout their time in school because their teachers seemed unable or unwilling to learn how to pronounce their real name correctly.

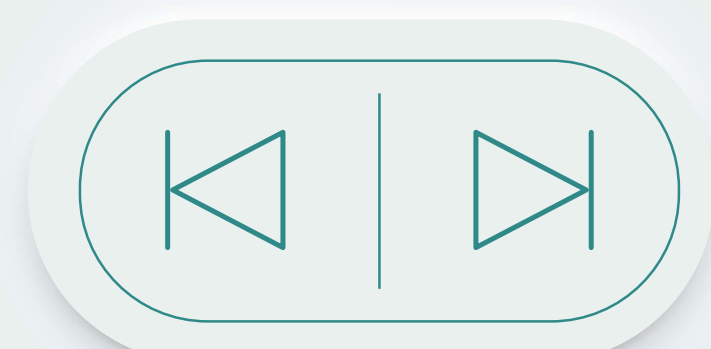
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We took a few things from the visit, including:

- a great pride in how harmonious our very diverse school community of students is
- how committed our predominantly White teaching and support staff are to EDI work
- how successful we have been so far in empowering and developing student voice opportunities for the benefit of the whole school population

One important next step that we need to ensure happens this year is that more staff and all governors have a chance to hear from these students and their experiences of life as a Parmiterian.

### November 2023

We attended the second Great Representation seminar. It was a very inspiring day, particularly the presentation from Sufian Sadiq. His candid and very personal reflections on how he is “defined and dismissed” due to his appearance (due to cultural and racial stereotyping) was very impactful. “I think we’re all a little racist, or is that tribal?” he challenged. Sufian was right when he said this would be the best presentation we would hear; if we had been guest speakers, we certainly wouldn’t have wanted to follow him!

The presentation from Claire Stewart-Hall provided an interesting breakdown of *privileged identities*. How do we, as a school, accommodate – or rather *include* – those (adults and children) who do not fit well with privileged identities?

Next we went on a visit to Hollybush Primary school. The leaders at the school are inspirational. They have such a challenging context regarding deprivation levels and the percentage of children with very challenging educational, personal and social needs. From the second you step inside the school building, you are overwhelmed by a sense of love, care and utter dedication to transforming these children’s lives. Leaders set a high bar for the quality of staff they employ, but there can be few schools where one’s professional work is both so important and rewarding.

We were given presentations from the school’s KS1 reading leads on the transformation of the reading scheme to widen cultural understanding and promote diversity. KS2 art curriculum overviews were also shared, where the focus is very prominent on BAME artists, both internationally and locally. We were inspired by how a topic on the Benin Bronzes has opened up an important debate amongst students regarding colonialism and the validity of keeping such works of art in the British Museum.

### December 2023

We attended the third seminar for the Great Representation cohort. Bennie Kara’s presentation addressed the notion of *usualising* people of colour in the curriculum, and it strongly resonated with our determination at Parmiter’s to avoid tokenism. The aspiration is to provide an experience that makes it *usual* to study a culturally diverse curriculum and aiming to remove or at least challenge notions of *otherness* (demystifying it).

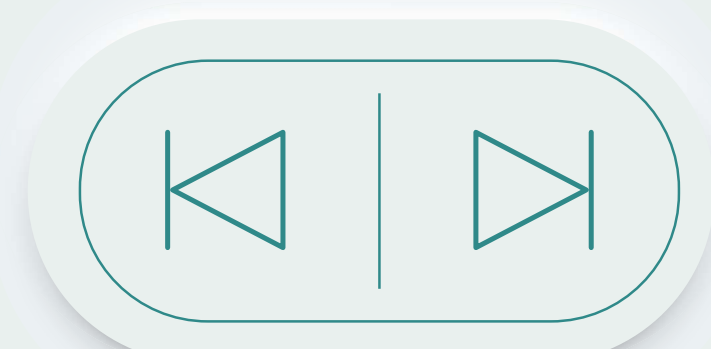
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Bennie also stressed the importance of engaging the cultural diversity of the staff (and student) body in co-constructing the curriculum. At Parmiter's we have started this, but it has to be an ongoing project, with regular student and staff voice surveys and reviews to ensure inclusivity. This becomes one of the critical drivers for maintaining our student and staff equalities working parties.

Two inspirational primary school headteachers, Seb Gray and Laurie O'Brien, shared their insights into engaging parents, carers and their families in school life and ensuring they feel that they *belong* as part of the school family. Seb reminded us of the first seminar and Paul Miller's mantra: *You see me, you hear me, I belong*, which has been embraced as the core vision of Laurence Haines school in Watford. Laurie provided a cautionary tale regarding how school communication can create a potential "cultural standoff" with sections of the parent and carer community and yet how, by taking time to bring people together, it is possible to persuade families that one can be different but still part of the same community.

### January 2024

At the fourth seminar for the Great Representation cohort, David Gillborn's presentation gave a very bleak and hard-hitting outlook on racism across society and schools. Toks Olusamokun provided an important practical session on racism and exclusions in schools. The key question is: *Do we see racism?* The message was about the importance of building relationships and a sense of belonging for all members of our school community, such that we resolve the issues that lead to the ultimate school sanctions.

Perhaps the most inspiring presentation came from Geeta Patel, headteacher of Mount Grace School, with reflections on her own upbringing. She also provided a key point about ensuring all young people receive the message about what is in their control. Empowerment is essential and is at the heart of effective student (and staff) voice initiatives in school.

### February 2024

We had another inspirational hub school visit to Wood End School in Harpenden. The opportunity to see primary schools in action, and to discuss their work with school leaders, staff and students on site, is a huge bonus for secondary school leaders on the Great Representation programme. Although there is a dramatic difference in context between Hollybush and Wood End, the visit was every bit as inspirational.

From a Parmiter's perspective, in visiting classes as they grew progressively older, it was fascinating to see not only how the curriculum was being sequenced in a developmental way but also the embedding of behaviours and attitudes (academic as well as personal and social). These were similarly sequenced such that these essential traits and values will serve each and every child, not just in the secondary sector but also in the world beyond school.

Another vital experience for us as secondary school leaders was to understand just how challenging the work was for Key Stage 2 students and to see their many accomplishments. This served as a further reminder of the need to ensure that our own Key Stage 3 curriculum starts with a high bar from the very start of Year 7.

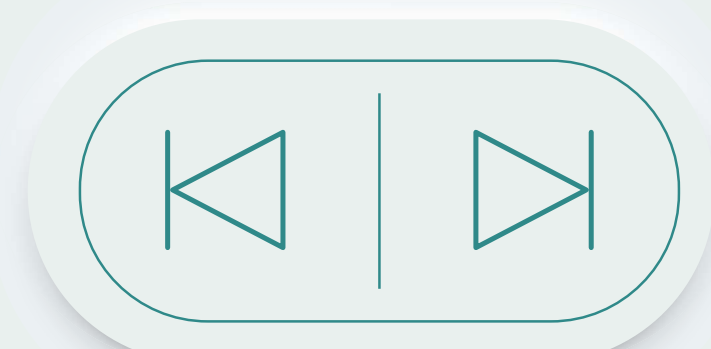
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The students we met with were so passionate about and proud of their school. Those from a BAME background had a further distance to travel to Wood End than their more local peers, who were from predominantly White backgrounds. One of the students had also joined the school later than her peers. Still, both children were clearly fully engaged in school life, both academically and socially, and felt very much that they belonged.

The visit concluded with a chance to see curriculum models reflecting how schemes of work had been adapted to be more inclusive. Wood End staff very kindly shared these among our hub group, as there were some exemplary models of overview sheets that would be very applicable to Key Stage 3 (or 4) schemes of work at Parmiter's.

### March 2024

At our final hub school visit we were welcomed to Oaklands Primary School in Welwyn. Once again, we were greeted by polite and engaged students across all year groups, and it was striking to observe the consistency in teaching and learning across the school, especially around literacy. Leaders provided examples and talked us through the investment the school has made in literacy, introducing books which are representative of numerous protected characteristics. The students we spoke with were extremely enthusiastic and appreciated books such as *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly and *The Island* by Armin Greder in terms of the characters and messages these books promoted.

One of the most interesting parts of the visit was Oakland's involvement with the Forest School programme, with the school taking advantage of its outdoor spaces. It was refreshing to see a school being more risk-tolerant, allowing students to play in the trees and bushes and manage their own safety and behaviour. The students were having a great time and emerged from all parts of the play areas when the bell sounded. It was also evident that students were developing forest skills independently, working in groups to create a variety of dens and other team-based activities. There are exciting plans to further develop the outdoor spaces to provide more opportunities for the students to play and learn.

Within our hub group, strong relationships have developed over the past six months. Colleagues are keen to help and support each other, not only in relation to the Great Representation programme but also by sharing good practice and ideas more generally. It was interesting to listen to conversations around curriculum mapping and the choices schools are making regarding contact and resources, as well as the importance of strategy around creating a positive culture for students and staff in light of what we have taken from the programme.

*Tim Henson and Michael Jones*

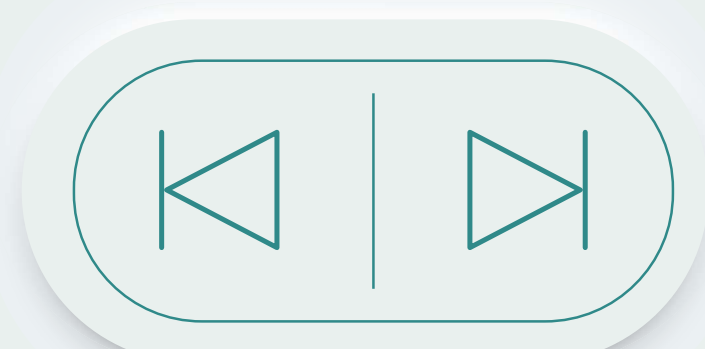
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# POPE PAUL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

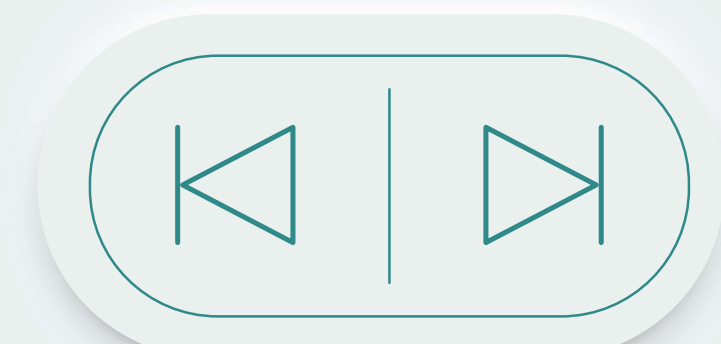
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## September 2023

Pope Paul is a one-form-entry Catholic Primary School situated in Potters Bar. At present, the school has 210 pupils on roll. There is a wide catchment area, with some children travelling from south of the M25.

As a Catholic school, we have strong links with our local parish, and 10% of our curriculum time is dedicated to RE teaching. Approximately 80% of our children are Catholic, but we welcome children of all faiths.

We celebrate the diversity of our community through our curriculum and our Catholic life, and we take every opportunity to acknowledge our mission prayer values of respect, care and using our talents to do our best. Over 25 languages are spoken within our school community, and we have a growing number of Eastern European children. Despite this diversity, only 3.3% of our children are from a Black African heritage. We feel that we are a small, welcoming inclusive school, where our children are happy and enjoy their learning. But are we really inspiring all our children to be the best that they can be?

A thought-provoking talk in February from Aisha Thomas, the founder of Representation Matters, asked us to consider representation in our school and challenged our unconscious bias. It made us reflect on how our children from ethnic minority backgrounds see themselves in our school. We started to consider the following questions:

- How do our children and families from ethnic minority backgrounds feel welcomed and included in our school community?
- Do all our children see and hear role models in school who are from the same culture?
- How do we ensure that our Black ethnic minority children maintain their sense of identity?
- Do all our children see themselves mirrored in the curriculum we offer and the displays around the school?
- How can we strengthen race equity in our school?

This thinking was strengthened with training from the diocese on the RJED (racial justice, equality and diversity) strategy, which made strong links with race equity and our Catholic ethos and vision.

Each year we focus on a Catholic life theme, which informs learning activities and curriculum development. Therefore, in September, we launched our year of diversity, which will enable us to focus on key areas covering culture, people, curriculum and leadership. We formed an action plan as part of our whole-school development plan, and we got going.

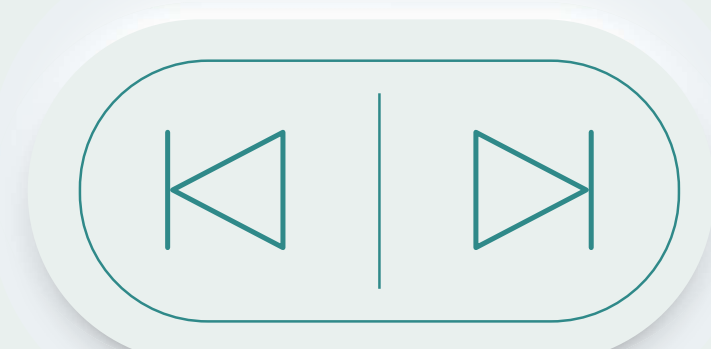
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We started the term with a meeting with all staff and governors to explore racism and cultural misrepresentation in wider society. We reflected on the fact that in Britain, Black children:

- are more likely to experience poverty
- have poorer educational outcomes
- are more likely to be excluded from school
- are more likely to be unemployed
- are more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system
- are less likely to access the care they need if they are struggling with mental health problems
- are more likely to act as carers and miss out on support

We arranged for all staff to have training with Aisha Thomas on shared examples of race equity in practice.

Following this training, we considered how our drive for race equity and representation of all cultures is linked to our mission prayer value of *building a better world*. How are we, as a small primary school, going to make a difference to the future leaders of our world?

### October 2023

During our first Great Representation seminar, Professor Paul Miller provided a thought-provoking insight into systemic racism, which still exists within the British educational system. We also had a chance to reflect on the hard facts concerning under-achievement of Black and minority ethnic groups.

Professor Paul Miller spoke about his personal experience in schools in the UK and the importance of a sense of belonging. Professor Paul Miller's quote, "You see me, you hear me, I belong", linked to our reflections following the talk from Aisha Thomas and made us think again about how welcoming and inclusive our school actually is. How can we capture the "voice of the child through the lens of belonging and identity", as Paul Miller put it?

The talk from Cynthia Rowe helped us to understand what life was like for her, growing up as a Black girl in England. She described many incidents of racism and discrimination from people of different racial groups. It was moving to hear of the bravery and resilience of Cynthia's parents as they embarked on a multiracial marriage amidst the attitudes of the time.

Hearing personal experiences from both speakers made us appreciate the urgency of change and helped us to understand the importance of intentional anti-racist teaching. Like safeguarding, we need to have EDI as an agenda item in every staff meeting and as an ongoing point of discussion and training. Our staff have raised concerns about the language of racism and not wanting to say the wrong thing or cause any offence. Talking about race in an educational setting can feel very challenging, and conversations can be difficult. We understand that it is crucial that our school staff foster a supportive and safe environment where vital discussions can take place.

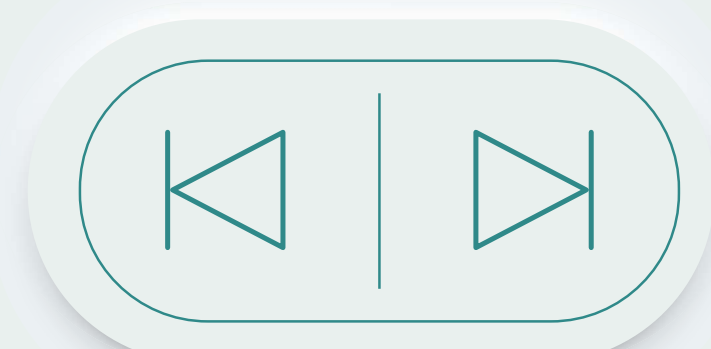
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Developing our racial literacy doesn't mean that we will ever have all the answers, nor would we be expected to. It means that we can feel more confident to have these important discussions and can feel more comfortable dealing with issues around racism as they arise. We understand that developing racial literacy should be thought of as a continuous process of learning and unlearning for educators at Pope Paul. We shall be arranging training for all to support this.

We were delighted to welcome our counterparts on the first of our Great Representation hub visits. It was an interesting experience to step back and view our school through the eyes of others.

The school's next steps are to:

- review the action plan
- conduct pupil voice, based on *You see me, you hear me, I belong*
- develop displays in every class where every child can see themselves
- plan One World Week (an annual event) so that the cultures represented in each class are celebrated and parents are personally invited to visit to share expertise
- appoint an EDI governor
- ensure that EDI is an item on every staff meeting and governor meeting
- allocate performance management targets for all staff linked to diversity, inclusion and equality

### November 2023

During our second seminar we heard from Sufian Sadiq, who asked us to “take a walk in my shoes”. Sufian is a passionate activist around race, equity and inclusion, and he addressed our group with an impassioned presentation about his personal experience living in Britain today as someone from an ethnic minority group, and of the impact the media has in exacerbating the challenges he faces. Simple experiences like always being detained when travelling through an airport, or sitting on a Tube with people around him displaying discomfort, are normal to him.

His words were both thought-provoking and emotional as he spoke about his career path and the barriers he faced on his journey. Sufian spoke about his daughter and how she wanted to change the colour of her skin to be like the White children in her class. This story was shocking and upsetting. It empowered us to want to absolutely make sure that we celebrate the differences in our school through our year of diversity, focusing particularly on our PSHE lessons related to self-esteem and self-worth.

Sufian's keynote helped us to reflect on how schools can become more inclusive environments. His talk generated discussion about the children and families in our school community who may feel like imposters, and about what we can do to improve their school experience. His message, *If you can be one thing, be an ally*, gave us a fire in our bellies to focus our learning activities for National Anti-bullying week on anti-racism.

Using the resources from [www.antiracism.education/primary](http://www.antiracism.education/primary), the children explored the concept of race and the difference between being non-racist and anti-racist.

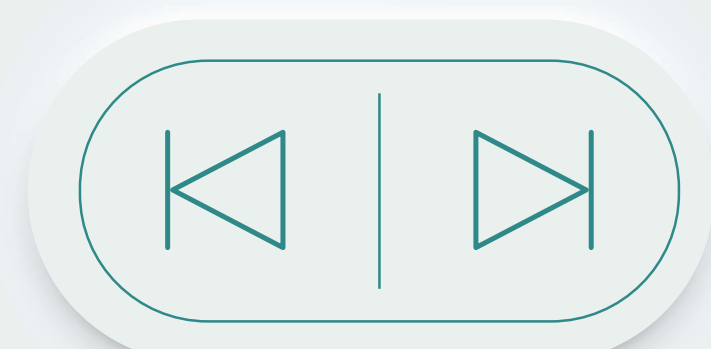
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Our mission prayer speaks of striving to build a better world, and so, if all our children are to flourish, grow and reach their potential, we must empower our children to speak out for justice and be actively anti-racist.

During the seminar we also heard from Claire Stewart-Hall, who asked us to consider institutionalised racism and policy interpretation. The ideas of race as a social construct and its impact on opportunities for ethnic minority staff were interesting. Claire's statement "In schools we move in the majority" made us reflect on our current practice, as a school with only 3.3% Black African children.

Following our One World Week this autumn term, pupil voice was overwhelmingly positive. Children from ethnic minority groups were proud to share their culture and were delighted that their parents were welcomed and valued by the school community. During a visit from our HFL Education school effectiveness adviser, children shared the importance of reading literature that featured people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Our Year 5 class are currently reading *Onyeka and The Academy of the Sun* by Tola Okogwu. One pupil said, "The main character is a girl from Nigeria and I am from Nigeria. Usually, I don't see Black people as the main character. It is very nice to see someone like me in an adventure."

It was inspiring to visit Nobel School in Stevenage to hear from pupils about the huge amount of work done to celebrate different cultures. Students spoke about the importance of representation, inclusion and diversity in their school, and of the ways in which they felt welcomed and supported. One student we spoke to was clearly passionate about the opportunities that the school had given him and described his experience at the school as *life-changing*. It is clear that Nobel School fosters positive relationships and mutual respect, as staff and students embrace diversity in a community full of opportunity.

Following anxiety from staff regarding the language of race, training was organised with Toks Olusamokun, HFL Education race equality adviser. Toks asked us to reflect on a number of scenarios where generalisations were being made regarding a particular race. This generated valuable discussion about stereotyping and prejudice. This welcomed training has given staff confidence in talking about race, and a renewed understanding of the importance of educating our children to be anti-racist.

## December 2023

Following Seminar 3, we reflected on the talk from Bernie Kara, founder of Diverse Educators. She asked us to consider ways to create a curriculum that is diverse but not tokenistic – "diversity should not be just a bolt-on". She also spoke of avoiding the term *normal* in terms of the curriculum and highlighted this as a binary term (the converse being *abnormal*). We need to think outside the normal!

It is key that we take advantage of significant events and aspirational figures within our curriculum to embed diversity and that, for each topic taught, there will be figures and stories from a variety of different cultures. Our children need to have a sense of belonging and, to achieve this, they need to see themselves in their learning each day and in all subjects.

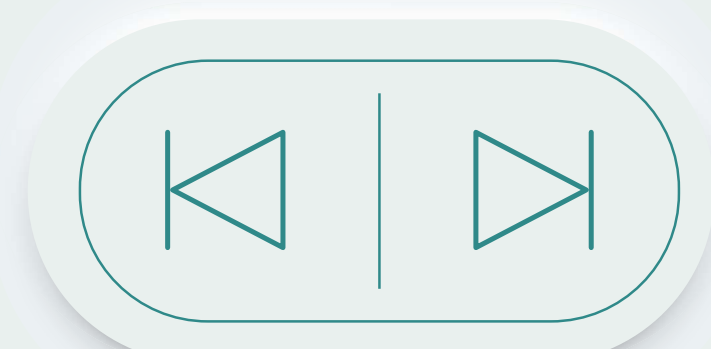
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How are we going to continue our journey to embed diversity in our curriculum in a meaningful way? Following a meeting with Toks Olusamokun, we decided to embark on the process of completing an HFL Education anti-racism package that will enable us to audit our whole-school approach to racial equity and anti-racism. It is divided into four main areas:

1. leadership
2. curriculum and resourcing
3. recruitment, retention and development
4. stakeholders

Perhaps some of the most beautiful aspects of Advent are the traditions it has inspired around the world. Our Advent service this month was another great opportunity for us as a school to share Advent traditions from Sweden (St Lucy), Philippines (Simbang Gabi), Spain and Zambia, and to learn more about the cultures that form part of our school community. We were delighted to see more diverse religious icons and children's paintings of Mary that showed Mary with Black skin and Brown skin. We saw children excited about sharing customs from their countries, and parents were delighted to be our "experts".

Our EDI governor's termly school visit highlighted our work to promote race equity and to increase the diversity of the curriculum we offer.

Following our newfound confidence, we now feel ready to conduct a parent survey based on *You see me, you hear me, I belong* (Paul Miller). We plan to start with broad questions and then communicate back to parents on what the key themes were and respond accordingly – perhaps inviting parents in for a meeting to discuss one of the issues. It will be interesting to see if there is a difference between the engagement levels of different groups of parents. As Dame Floella Benjamin writes in *Coming to England*, "To feel you belong is a most important necessity of life."

Talking about race and religion, learning about differences and encouraging respectful disagreement is how we can grow as a school community, ensuring our school is a place where everyone belongs. We want to continue to celebrate the range of wonderful diversities we have across our community, and actively work to understand how our different backgrounds and cultures make us a stronger, more dynamic society.

We endeavour to create a community that celebrates, shares and talks about race, gender and cultures without any anxiety.

## January 2024

As part of Toks Olusamokun's inspiring presentation at Seminar 4, it was affirming to hear the following quote:

"From primary to higher education stages, a sense of belonging is a reliable predictor of attainment outcomes and is characteristically lower amongst students from marginalised ethnic groups."

– NEU-commissioned research, "Place and belonging in school: Why it matters today", November 2020

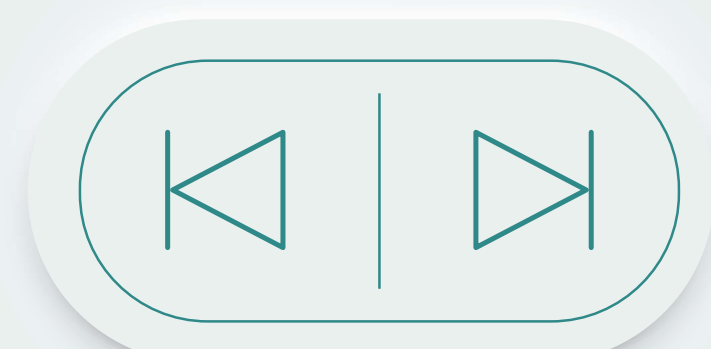
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This drive to really ensure that our community feels that they belong has been at the heart of our work so far this year. This month, during our parent consultations, we launched our parent community survey. It was the perfect time to catch our parents and share the QR code that could be accessed whilst waiting to see a teacher. We decided on the following questions:

- Do you feel a welcome part of our school community?
- How well do you think the school ensures parents/guardians from all backgrounds, nationalities and cultures feel welcomed and accepted?
- How well do you think the school promotes a sense of inclusion among pupils from different backgrounds and with different needs?
- How well do you think the school provides opportunities for pupils to celebrate and learn about different cultures?
- If you have a concern, do you feel comfortable raising it with the school?
- Do you have any suggestions for what the school could do to encourage all parents/guardians to feel more a part of the school community?
- Would you be willing to join a working party to further explore diversity throughout the school?
- Is there anything else that you would like to suggest to support our school?

We look forward to feeding back the results of this survey next month.

As part of her presentation, Toks asked us to reflect on the shocking comments and racist remarks that students from the University of Birmingham – #ITooAmBirmingham – have experienced. This again cemented our resolve to work with Toks on our anti-racism audit. At our first meeting we were challenged to consider how anti-racism and race equity are an integral part of all our school policies. Do we proactively seek to ensure that policies are culturally appropriate and sensitive? Although the anti-racism message is evident in some of our policies, it is not truly embedded in all.

During the seminar David Gillborn, emeritus professor of Critical Race Studies at Birmingham University, spoke about race as a social construct. “Race is given meaning in social interaction ... therefore, race/racism cannot be ignored.” David presented the ways in which parts of the media have a coordinated policy against anti-racism. He showed newspaper headlines that claim White working-class boys are falling behind every other group in schools and explained that these statistics represent solely the pupil premium eligible group. Headlines that present White students as victims of multi-racism clearly obstruct the work of anti-racists. These comments were shocking to hear and led to discussions about the influence of the press on the lives of our school community.

This week, in school, we celebrated the beginning of Lent with our Ash Wednesday services, attended by all our children and many parents. This period of prayer,

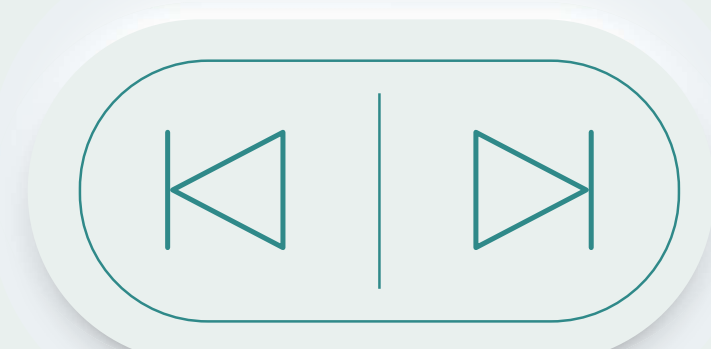
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reflection, fasting and giving to others, calls us to live simply. It is a wonderful opportunity in school to focus on diversity and highlight the pillars of Catholic Social teaching. One of these pillars is dignity; everyone has the right to be acknowledged for their inherent humanity and treated fairly. Do we treat all members of our school community with dignity? Our work continues!

**March 2024**

Last month we were welcomed to Leverstock Green Primary School. It was wonderful to learn more about how the staff have developed their anti-racism agenda and to talk to children about their school experience. We were struck by how the learning environment enabled children to have the time to reflect and be still; the children spoke with enthusiasm about the spaces, as well as the opportunities they have to celebrate different cultures. The children were obviously very proud of their school and felt strongly that they belonged.

We were pleased with the results of our parent community questionnaire launched last month. 61 parents submitted responses, and the findings were as follows:

Question	Responses
Do you feel a welcome part of our community?	Yes, absolutely – 85% Most of the time – 15%
How well do you think the school ensures parents/ guardians from all backgrounds, nationalities and cultures feel welcomed and accepted?	Very well – 89% Well – 11%
How well do you think the school promotes a sense of inclusion among pupils from different backgrounds and with different needs?	Very well – 89% Well – 11%
How well do you think the school provides opportunities for pupils to celebrate and learn about different cultures?	Very well – 91% Well – 9%
If you have a concern, do you feel comfortable raising it with the school?	Yes – 90% Never had a concern – 10%

15 parents expressed an interest in joining a working party focusing on diversity and inclusion; this included parents from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. We are excited to meet for the first time next term to explore how we can strengthen our links with parents and further develop our focus on diversity.

As a result of the questionnaire, some parents have requested more opportunities to meet together as parents, and others would like more school events where parents are invited to participate. We will be considering these suggestions and exploring ways in which we can engage with all stakeholders.

At our seminar last month we listened to Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga, who talked about antisemitism and the concerning rise in incidents or racism since 7 October 2023. She shared examples of parents writing letters describing Holocaust education as *indoctrination*, and we viewed photos of vandalised Jewish gravestones.

It reminded us of the importance of ensuring that all beliefs are valued and that as a Catholic school we have a special relationship with people of the Jewish faith.

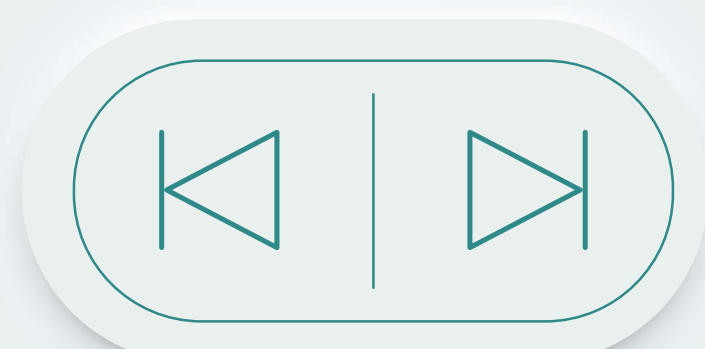
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We continue to work to enrich our curriculum; a highlight was during Science Week, when every class explored the contribution of a scientist. A child from Year 4 whose family is from Ghana said:

This week in Science Week, I have been learning about two female scientists. One of them is Katherine Johnson who started school when she was five. However, she also skipped lots of school because many people kicked her. She started high school when she was just ten years old! Maths came easy to her. She was one of the first African–American women to work as a NASA scientist. She is my inspiration and she looks like me!

As Dr Stella Louise reminds us, “All children need to see positive images of people who look like them to enable them to think that they too can be successful, and this is especially important for children who are racially minoritised.”

The Great Representation programme has provided us with the opportunity to reflect on, discuss, investigate and share our journey through this year of diversity and race equity. Listening to experts talking on issues such as representation in the curriculum and critical race theory, and leading on anti-racism in school, has allowed us to broaden and deepen our understanding of the complexities surrounding equality and diversity, especially with regard to race.

It has been a privilege to hear from a range of people of colour who have so passionately spoken about their lived experiences. Listening to accounts of racism has been moving and challenging and has cemented the importance of our race equity work. Our school mission prayer starts, *We believe that we are all God’s work of art.* It is our moral duty to treat all people with respect as they are made and loved by God, whatever their creed or colour.

It is not enough for us to simply not be racist. We must be active to ensure that our school works towards being anti-racist in all ways.

We will continue our journey strengthened by our experience gained from the Great Representation programme and with the support of the anti-racism audit work we have started. We are very grateful for having had the opportunity to take part in this programme as we strive to build a better world through promoting justice, peace and equity.

Equality is the planning committee.

Diversity is being invited to the party.

Inclusion is being invited to the dance.

Belonging is choosing a song.

– Aisha Thomas

*Liz Heymoz and Catherine McNamara*

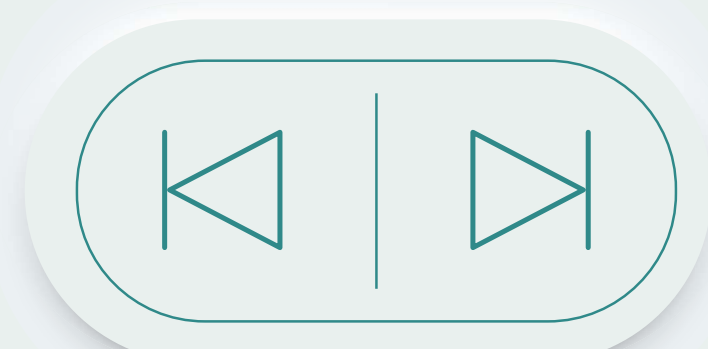
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# RIDGEWAY ACADEMY

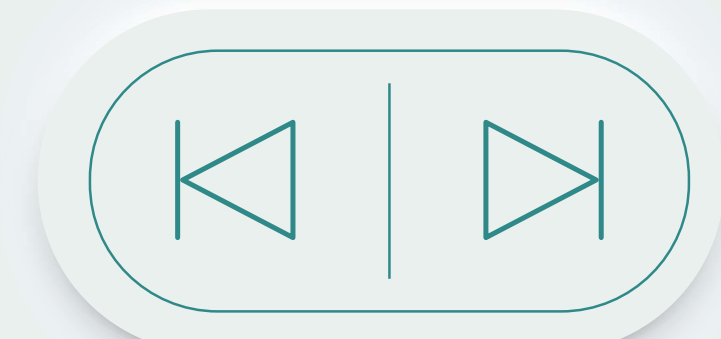
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## September 2023

Ridgeway Academy joined the Alban Academies Trust in 2018, a multi-academy trust (MAT) with four primary schools and three secondary schools. There are 969 pupils on roll, which represents a 42% increase since 2018. The school admits 180 students in each year group. 32% of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium grant. The school has 14 ethnic groups represented amongst its pupil population. 80% of pupils are identified as White British. 13 students are Young Carers. The school is in quintile 4 (more deprived) in terms of school location and pupil base. 204 pupils are on the SEN register.

Ridgeway Academy is located in a predominantly White area, in Welwyn Garden City. With a growing number of racially minoritised students and staff, we feel it is a crucial time to gain valuable education on how best to ensure *Everyone can achieve*, regardless of backgrounds.

We were made aware of the Great Representation programme by another school in our trust and received positive feedback on the impact of the course. As a school with a growing population of students from underrepresented backgrounds, we are committed to ensuring that we promote anti-racist practices in all that we do. We feel that we have started to make steps towards being more culturally aware of the challenges faced by students from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, we are keen to work collaboratively with other schools to share best practice.

Our aim is to ensure that all members of our school community feel seen, heard and represented. We are aware that students from underrepresented backgrounds have often had to sit through learning experiences that further marginalise people of colour or downplay the roles played by these communities in historic events. We are keen to identify the best strategies to promote the positive impact that diverse communities have had on the world. Some of our subject areas have begun to consider the topics taught throughout their curriculum and how these portray different communities. We are keen to hear what other schools are doing in this area, to ensure that all subject areas can offer a well-balanced and anti-racist curriculum.

As well as considering the impact of the curriculum on underrepresented student groups, we are also aware that there is a need to ensure we have positive role models within the staff body for all students.

Our next step is an EDI audit, which will identify priority strategic actions.

## October 2023

We are delighted to be in the 2023–24 cohort of HFL Education’s race equity programme, Great Representation. Professor Paul Miller’s presentation on “Racism, Anti-racism and Educational Leadership” revealed distressing information about race inequity in the UK.

It is imperative that schools work with their communities to address the difficulties faced by students and staff from underrepresented backgrounds; many are still on the receiving end of both conscious and unconscious biases.

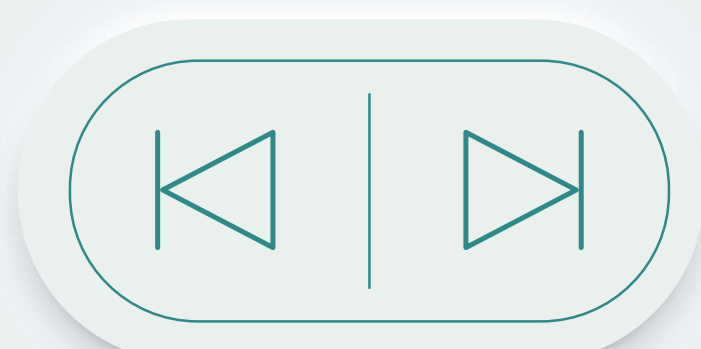
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As agreed with our partner schools on Seminar 1, we hosted the first school visit. During the visit we delivered the following programme to showcase what we are currently doing to improve representation in our school setting.

### Discussion with subject teachers

We met with various teachers (English, media studies, history and head of sixth form) to discuss what measures have been put in place to diversify the curriculum in their subject areas. Teachers spoke about the fact that they have considered how the texts they use portray underrepresented communities, have looked at the portrayal of different communities in the media, and have considered the periods of history studied in the KS3 and KS5 history curriculum.

### Discussion with students

We met with a group of Black and mixed-race students from Years 8–13 to discuss their experiences in both secondary and primary school. This allowed our visitors to hear what it feels like to be a student from an underrepresented background. Our deputy head student (a Black female) spoke of some of the positive and negative experiences she has been faced with. She talked passionately about programmes she feels she missed out on, which would have been useful for her and other Black students when applying for universities. We are keen to ensure that this is something that does not happen again.

### Black History Month assembly

In this section of the visit, we went through our Black History Month assembly that was delivered to students this October. Following some not so positive feedback regarding last year's assembly, we were keen to ensure the assembly was current and engaging for all students. We made sure that common misconceptions and racial stereotypes were challenged and highlighted the positive impact that the BAME community has had and continues to have on our everyday lives.

### Tour of the school

During the tour of the school, our visitors were given the opportunity to see the school site and visit a number of lessons. We were pleased to receive positive feedback on the *calm* and *respectful* nature of the learning environment. Additionally, our visitors were able to speak with students in our Haven Centre (specialist provision for some of our students with specific SEND needs) and visit our behaviour unit.

This process was a very valuable one, in the sense that it allowed us to have a look at ourselves as a school to see what is going well and, more importantly, what needs to be improved on. Our hub group colleagues provided us with positive feedback, whilst also pointing out some areas in our practice that need to be improved. We look forward to visiting our partner schools in the near future, as we continue to strive for great representation.

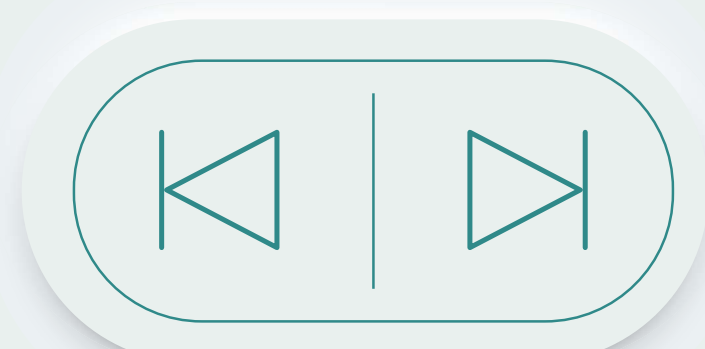
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## November 2023

We found Seminar 2 to again be very enlightening and, in fact, quite hard-hitting. We first heard a testimony from a local primary school's headteacher, titled "What it is like to be Black and British". This highlighted the struggles faced by a Black female growing up in a predominantly White environment. The speech gave a firsthand, lived experience and included information about the struggles faced but also the strength gained from the support of White allies. The theme of allyship and the point that ensuring schools are anti-racist environments should be everyone's responsibility were themes that came up many times throughout the day.

In the afternoon we heard from Sufian Sadiq, director of the Teaching School at the Chiltern Learning Trust. Sufian gave an incredibly emotional speech about his lived experience, making reference to some very current and relevant happenings. Sufian spoke about racist experiences that both he and his family have had to endure, including being spat at whilst on holiday in Cornwall, as well as racist language directed at his daughter whilst at school. These experiences continue to have a damaging effect on Sufian's sense of belonging, despite his substantial contributions to his local and wider society.

Sufian spoke about the media's portrayal of different groups of people and the impact that this can have on perceptions and, in fact, actions towards these groups. He touched on how the negative portrayal of underrepresented groups can impact on individuals in both the wider society as well as in schools. This section again prompted us to consider how Ridgeway Academy students from underrepresented backgrounds may feel and reminded us of the need to continue to hold conversations with students about their experiences.

Since Seminar 2 we have had a push on increasing student voice, with members of the senior and middle leadership teams completing a school culture questionnaire. One of the purposes of the questionnaire was to find out what it feels like to be a student at Ridgeway Academy, with students encouraged to speak openly and honestly. We asked if students had ever experienced or witnessed any racist or discriminatory incidents, whether they were aware of where and how to report such incidents, and whether or not they felt safe in school. Findings from the questionnaire have been largely positive, with the majority of students stating that they feel safe and proud to attend Ridgeway Academy. We did, however, find that a number of students have heard or witnessed discriminatory comments being made, often "as banter", which is something we need to do more to address.

Sufian also spoke about how he, as a practicing Muslim, feels about the current conflict in Gaza. He reflected on the difference in the language used by the media when speaking about the people of colour that are involved in conflict (e.g. Palestinians), compared with when speaking about White victims of the war (e.g. Ukrainians).

This November we made use of the headteacher's address at our Remembrance Day service to pay tribute to all that have served Britain in the armed forces, making specific reference to those from minority backgrounds, who are often overlooked. Our Remembrance Day assembly, delivered to all year groups, also focused on a Black British pilot who served in the Royal Air Force. We are committed to trying to promote the fact that Black history goes hand in hand with British history.

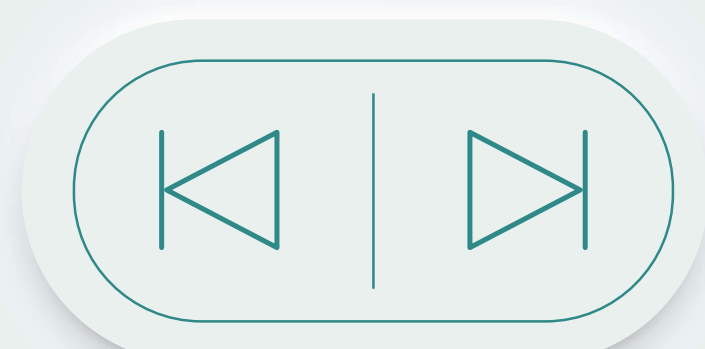
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We completed a very interesting school visit to one of our partner schools, Thorn Grove Primary School in Bishop's Stortford. This was a fantastic opportunity to see how the primary setting operates, and it was a really useful activity. We spent time touring the school and visited lessons from all year groups. It was great to see that the school was making continued efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity. Thorn Grove Primary School makes use of bright and colourful artwork and displays to highlight lots of the great work that is being done to promote inclusivity. Examples included:

- a world map and flags of the different nationalities represented at the school
- a pledge signed by all students, with a specific focus on respecting all and not being bystanders to any forms of discrimination
- musician-of-the-month displays, representing artists and genres from various backgrounds
- a display of the recent No Outsiders diversity course that the school had enrolled on and completed

Perhaps the most important section of this visit was the opportunity to speak with a group of Year 5 and 6 students from underrepresented backgrounds. We were really impressed by the levels of maturity and openness with which the students spoke. Our conversation touched on a recent racist incident and how it was dealt with by the school. It was clear to see that students felt comfortable speaking openly to the headteacher and deputy headteacher and that the school is continuously taking on feedback, from students and parents alike.

This school visit has given us some helpful ideas about how we can improve the visual appearance of our school, with meaningful and educational displays that also promote diversity and inclusion.

We feel that we are on a journey towards ensuring Ridgeway Academy is a completely anti-racist and inclusive school, although we understand that there is a lot more to be done. We are thoroughly enjoying the sharing of good practice and knowledge gained at each seminar. We will continue to consider our practice as a school, to ensure that we are providing the environment in which *Everyone can achieve*.

## December 2023

Seminar 3 provided us with another fantastic opportunity to hear about some of the lived experiences of local leaders. One of the speakers, Melissa Lowry, spoke about her experiences "Growing Up Mixed Up" in London schools. This speaker particularly resonated with one of us – Ryan – who also grew up as a mixed-race child in London schools. Melissa spoke about the fact that she often struggled to feel totally accepted by both her White and Black counterparts. Hearing another professional, from a very similar background, speak so vulnerably about her experiences provided further food for thought in terms of the support and steps that need to be taken and considered when dealing with students from all backgrounds.

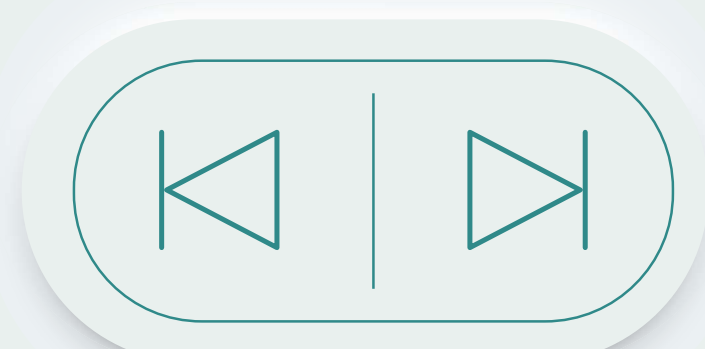
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We all sometimes make unconscious presumptions based on what we feel we see. Ryan has noticed that, since living and working in Hertfordshire, he tends to be referred to as a Black man, whilst growing up in London he was generally referred to as mixed race. This was then complicated further, as his Black family members would see him as White. Although these experiences have not had a damaging effect on him personally, he can imagine this lack of belonging and/or incorrect labelling is probably an issue that students and staff from underrepresented backgrounds face regularly.

Another one of the speakers, Laurie O'Brien, spoke on the difficulties, but also the importance, of "Engaging the parent community". An example was shared of a parent communication that went home in order to appease parents but managed to have the opposite effect with some parents. Laurie spoke about the fact that we must consider the culture and backgrounds of all families within our school community and be careful not to appear biased in our views. Despite the initial parent backlash and difficult experience that Laurie shared, we were impressed and inspired by the steps taken to restore frayed relationships with an open-door approach. The power of listening to parent voices and making bold moves to address any concerns raised was really impressive.

Seb Gray's session focused on the importance of acknowledging the fact that we all have some subconscious biases and different positionalities. The idea that we need to provide safe spaces, which allow all stakeholders to speak freely, was a theme that ran through the talk. Both Laurie and Seb's presentations reaffirmed the importance of encouraging a collaborative approach to moving forward and improving the equity, diversity and inclusion within our school community.

Finally, Bennie Kara's presentation highlighted the importance of ensuring that diversity is not just a bolt-on in the curriculum. Bennie stressed the importance of students feeling as if they belonged. This session was helpful in providing some practical measures that can be put in place to support schools from a curriculum's perspective. At Ridgeway Academy there have been a number of changes to the curriculum to try and diversify the experience given to students. However, we are aware more that needs to be done and are keen to keep moving in the right direction.

### January/February 2024

Seminar 4 began with David Gillborn, emeritus professor of Critical Race Studies at Birmingham University, leading a session titled: "What's going on and what can we do about it?" The session explored the traditional view of racism versus a more critical understanding of what racism is, and what it can look like day to day for people of colour. David discussed the fact that the more traditional and obvious forms of racism, associated with far-right extremists, are clearly frowned on and addressed in the workplace. These incidents are exceptional occurrences driven by crude race hatred, which occur fairly infrequently.

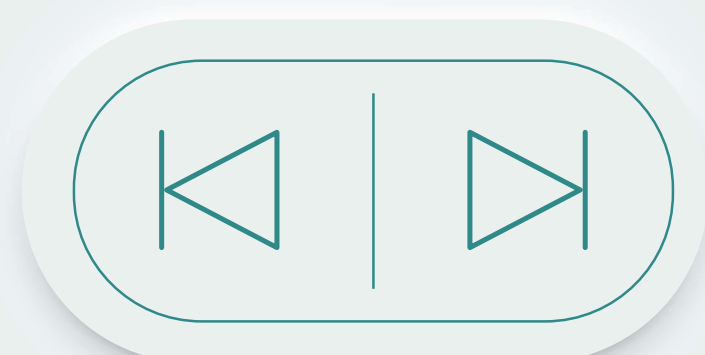
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David spoke about the greater issue being the subtle and extensive racist acts that exist and have been normalised, which people of colour often have to deal with on a daily basis. Examples include:

- low expectations of Black learners
- overrepresentation of Black students in sanctions
- the disparity between the number of applicants for initial teacher training (where people of colour are overrepresented) compared with the underrepresentation of people of colour on the teaching and leadership groups in British schools

The session continued by exploring the cycle of *convergence*, *divergence* and *reclamation*. This cycle essentially suggests that society often gets to a stage where racism and injustice are so widespread and obvious that something needs to be done to protect White interests and the overall system. At this stage (convergence), changes are made, at least in the short term, as not doing so would be very damaging. The divergence stage of the cycle refers to the point at which the White population are led to believe that their interests are being sacrificed to minorities. At this stage, supporting suggested changes starts to become an inconvenience, and the media is often used to cause division, leading to policy and practice amendments to suit White interests. Finally, the reclamation stage is the point at which the equality gains that had previously been made are cut back on, and the *business-as-usual* forms of racism that people of colour endure resurface.

As well as being another eye-opener to widespread prevalence of racism that exists in our communities and therefore schools, David's session provided us with some useful advice on how to begin to combat such issues. Strategies such as the *critical mass* approach encouraged us to find like-minded colleagues that are keen to support a mutual cause.

The importance of *counting* was also highlighted. For example, counting the number of staff members on the senior or middle leadership team that were from underrepresented backgrounds, or counting the number of exclusions that have been issued to children of colour compared with their White counterparts. As a school, we have made use of this strategy immediately to ensure that we are including underrepresented students in a recent student voice survey.

On the first day of collecting student responses, it was noticed that no students from an EAL background had been spoken to. To ensure that this cohort was heard, we had a focus on targeting underrepresented groups. By the end of the survey, 19% of the students that were spoken to were from an EAL background. This represented a fairly significant number, as only 7% of our cohort are from EAL backgrounds. We will continue to use the simple but effective strategy of counting to make further improvements to our practice, with a particular focus on equality and inclusion.

The second speaker, Toks Olusamokun – race equality adviser for HFL Education – delivered a fantastic session on the importance of addressing incidents of racism in school. Throughout the session, Toks made reference to a number of high-profile incidents in which the school system had severely failed to deal with incidents of racism to protect children of colour from harm. Although somewhat distressing to

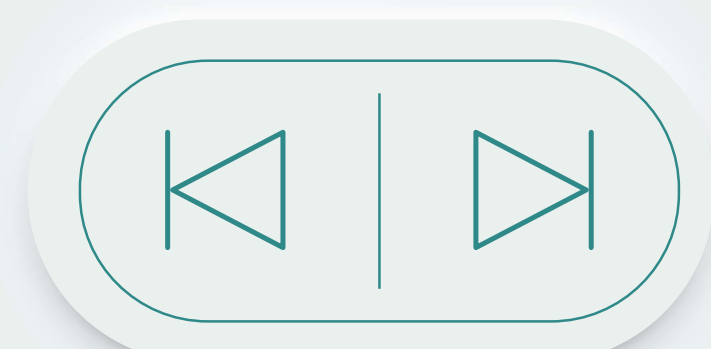
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hear, it was a stark reminder of the importance of ensuring that we have the correct policy in place to respond to racist incidents and provide the appropriate level of support to any victims.

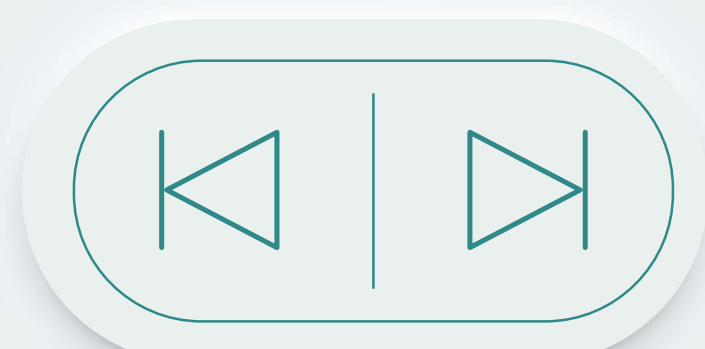
Toks went on to speak on the key concepts of bias, adultification, invisibility and hypervisibility, which can all be negative experiences, which people of colour have to deal with on a regular basis. The session ended with some key actions the school can take to ensure that all incidents of racism are dealt with effectively. There was a strong focus on the importance of recording incidents of racism, to inform future practice, and ultimately to work towards making the school environment one that is anti-racist and safe for all.

There were a number of useful takeaways from this session, which we will be using to prevent/address racist incidents in our school. One example is the model letter to parents, which was provided. We have drafted a letter, which we aim to share with families in the coming weeks.

The last speaker of the day was Geeta Patel – headteacher of Mount Grace School – who delivered an inspiring session, titled: “Pixelated Perspectives”. Geeta spoke openly about some of her lived experiences and shared some fascinating stories relating to her family. Part of the session focused on the importance of belonging, and the fact that the sense of belonging starts with your name. We are acutely aware of the fact that some students and staff have felt the need to shorten or amend their names as they are not typically British names and might be considered difficult to pronounce. We feel that, as professionals, we have a duty to ensure that staff and students are taking the time to address people using their birth name. Geeta spoke about the microaggressions she has faced, relating to a British Asian television character that happens to share the same name as her; and the grating negative effect this had on her.

Perhaps the most inspiring section of Geeta’s session was the part in which she detailed the journey that her daughter had taken to finally feel accepted into the world of film and television. This journey started with a young girl performing in tights and pointe shoes that did not match her skin tone, achieving mediocre scores in her ballet exams, and being rejected from hundreds of potential castings. With the introduction of tonal pointe shoes and tights, which more closely matched her daughter’s skin tone, there was an immediate sense of belonging and an incredible improvement in her progress towards her goals. Geeta’s daughter went from strength to strength and saw her grades reach a staggering 93% in her ballet exams. This success was closely followed by her first professional acting role, following a successful casting, at the 169th time of applying.

This lived experience highlighted the significance of the link between students’ sense of belonging and the levels of success achieved. This is a view shared by the NEU-commissioned research “Place and belonging in school: Why it matters today”, which found that from primary to higher education stages, a sense of belonging is a reliable predictor of attainment outcomes and is characteristically lower amongst students from marginalised ethnic groups.”

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As a school we are determined to ensure that every member of our community feels a sense of belonging to our school, and we will be considering the best ways to ensure this is the case. Findings from this seminar have suggested that this is likely not only to benefit students in their social and mental development, but also to have a positive impact on their academic outcomes.

### March 2024

The penultimate Great Representation seminar provided us with further insight into some of the difficulties we continue to face regarding various forms of discrimination. The session started with Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga from UCL's Centre for Holocaust Education, who highlighted some of the horrendous issues that members of the Jewish community have to deal with on a regular basis. Ruth-Anne spoke about the fact that, despite there being a great interest in dead Jewish people by the wider society, (visiting Auschwitz, the Anne Frank Museum, etc), there seems to be very little empathy for the living Jewish community.

Ruth-Anne gave some distressing examples of the increase in discrimination and hate crimes that the Jewish community are currently facing as a result of the ongoing conflict in Gaza. We have a duty as educators to ensure that any acts of discrimination are addressed appropriately, and we need to ensure that we are aware of exacerbating circumstances and respond appropriately. Ruth-Anne shared a reviewing tool for self-assessing a school's progress in addressing antisemitism, intolerance, bias and prejudice. This tool will be useful in assessing our current processes and making improvements where necessary.

The second speaker, Penny Rabiger, spoke about the importance of not only addressing the "elephant in the room", with regard to racism and discrimination, but also staying around to ensure that any proposed changes are followed through. Penny spoke about the importance of looking at all school policies through an anti-racist lens and ensuring that staff CPD sessions with a focus on anti-racism are compulsory. This is in line with the annual safeguarding training that staff need to undertake, rather than a session that can be missed by staff members or one in which the slides are shared in place of completing the actual training session.

Penny gave some excellent advice on things to consider on our journey towards becoming an anti-racist school. She challenged us to consider whether or not staff and students feel that racist incidents are dealt with effectively, to consider the barriers to parents and carers attending after school events and also to understand who is – or, more importantly, who is not – accessing our hidden curriculum, including extra-curricular clubs and activities.

March provided us with the opportunity to complete our final two hub group school visits, once again giving us a great insight to the work being done in schools across Hertfordshire.

The first visit was to Roebuck Academy in Stevenage, with its amazingly unique

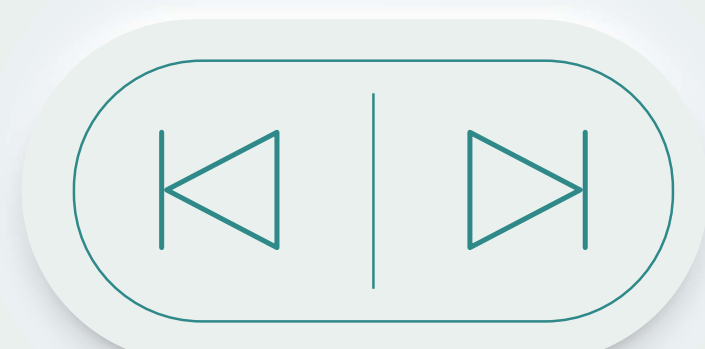
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building, in terms of its design. We visited the vast majority of classes and were warmly welcomed by all staff and students. One of the things that stood out most was the work that had been done to ensure the library was the hub of the school and a place that students and staff were really proud of. Within this amazing facility, there was a plethora of books that contained characters from a wide and diverse ethnic mix. These books seem to have been seamlessly integrated into the selection of texts available to all students, rather than being a token gesture for the purpose of our visit.

We were also given the opportunity to watch a video of a wonderful cultural day that took place last academic year. This was a celebration of the different cultures that make up the school community, with parents and students sharing food, traditional clothing and other exciting traditions with the wider school community. During a discussion with a student panel, the children spoke very fondly about this day and the fact that they felt a sense of pride when sharing their cultural traditions with their peers. We have been particularly inspired by this event and will be looking to replicate something similar with our families in the summer term. With 26 different languages being spoken at our school, we would like the opportunity to celebrate the growing diversity within our community.

Our second school visit during March was to St Rose's Catholic Infant School. During this visit we were given the opportunity to visit a number of classes to see the great work that is being done. We also spoke with the student leadership team, who shared with us some of the things they have been doing to support the local community. They spoke of the pride they felt in being given the opportunity to represent the school when speaking to external visitors. This was a diverse group of young children, who came across as great representatives of their school.

Within our own school setting, this month we have taken some further steps towards ensuring all members of our school community are clear on our stance on racism and discrimination. To this effect, we sent a communication home reiterating our stance on discriminatory behaviour and the steps that we have in place to ensure that any such incidents are dealt with effectively and severely. This letter provided students and parents with clarity and will act as a reference point when dealing with any discriminatory incidents.

We held a series of assemblies, which were delivered to all year groups by a collection of senior staff members: the headteacher; deputy headteacher in charge of behaviour; and two assistant headteachers, in charge of safeguarding and school culture, respectively. These assemblies were in response to a recent increase in incidents of negative views and attitudes being aimed at students and staff from underrepresented backgrounds. As well as reminding our students of our stance on racism and other forms of discrimination, these assemblies also shared some of the information gained from the Great Representation programme. We highlighted the importance of:

- acting as an ally
- reporting any incidents of discrimination
- celebrating the diversity of our school community

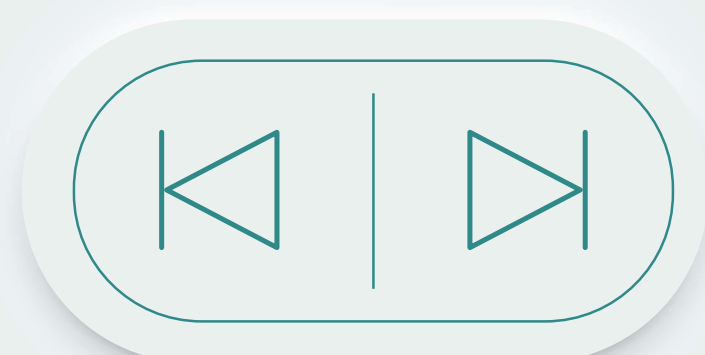
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These assemblies seemed to be well received by students, with some Year 11 students making a point of speaking to us afterwards to say that it was a really important assembly. Since the delivery of these assemblies, we have seen an increase in the reporting of incidents and have therefore been able to respond more effectively.

With March seeing the start of Ramadan, we recognised a great opportunity to share with our students an assembly on the activities that Muslim families undertake during this sacred time. The assembly was delivered by a Muslim member of staff, who explained how and when Ramadan takes place each year, the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, the process of fasting, and the support and sense of belonging she gains from being part of a global community. The teacher who delivered the assembly shared with us that she felt the assembly had really acted to break down some barriers and open up communication between herself and students in her classroom. This was really nice to hear, and we will look for additional opportunities to celebrate other faiths in a similar way.

As we come towards the end of the Great Representation programme, we feel that we are now well and truly on the way to making some real improvements to the experience of students and staff at Ridgeway Academy. We have a long way to go to ensure that our school is a place where everyone feels truly represented. However, the programme has given us deeper insight into some of the issues that we are faced with, as well as providing some great direction in terms of what further work needs to be done. We are fully committed to becoming an anti-racist school in which *Everyone can achieve and look forward to the journey ahead.*

*Ryan Nelson and Sarah Mitcherson*

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# ROEBUCK ACADEMY

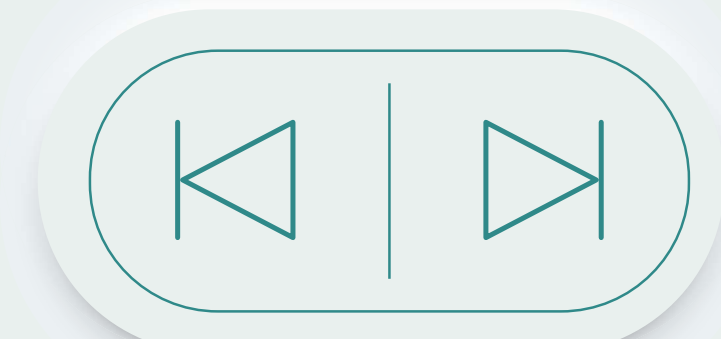
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## September 2023

Roebuck Academy is a medium-sized, two-form-entry primary school in Broadwater, Stevenage – an area of relatively high deprivation. After a period of expansion, the school finds itself full, with around 461 pupils across Nursery to Year 6. In the summer of 2023, 20 languages were spoken and 16% of the pupils identified as having English as an additional language. Pupil characteristics show that 28% of the pupils have SEND, 19% are eligible for free school meals, and 22% are in receipt of pupil premium funding.

The school's motto – *Dream, Believe, Achieve* – is shared widely within the community, and a lot of work has gone into trying to raise the aspirations of pupils and parents alike. We have previously taken part in the HFL Education Great Expectations programme and have worked hard to overcome the barriers to aspirations that we feel the pupils and parents of the school have.

Approximately 70% of the pupil population is White British, with 7.3% being White other. Over the last few years, the intake of pupils has become more diverse than previously. The school is seeing a growth in the number of pupils from diverse groups, especially those entering the school at Nursery and Reception. The pupil population is more diverse than that of the staff.

Following high profile events such as the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement, the school has identified the need to ensure our commitment to race equality. The head and deputy attended Herts Voices training and applied to take part in the Great Representation Programme. This felt like the natural next step for the school.

We have held assemblies where issues of race diversity and racism have been shared with the children. Events have been planned through the year to fit in with our values of *Respect* and *Resilience*, including Black History Month events, where we have focused on a range of themes linked to the topic of racism. The impact of these assemblies has been that the children have become more aware of the issues facing society as a whole on the theme of diversity. Children have felt comfortable talking about the issues of race and racism. However, we felt as a leadership team that we wanted to avoid being tokenistic, and we have tried to follow a deliberate approach to make significant changes to the curriculum and practices in school.

The decision was taken by the headteacher to undertake an EDI audit run by HFL Education to assess the position that the school was currently in. The audit took place in the summer term of 2023, over the period of one day, and was led by Toks Olusamokun and Shammi Rahman, HFL Education's race equality advisers. The two advisers spent time in school looking at the learning environment, classrooms and lessons. They also spoke to a range of stakeholders, including the headteacher, assistant headteacher, equalities EDI leader, subject leaders in a variety of different curriculum areas, the school council and Dream Team members. Discussions explored how EDI is implemented across the school. A short tour of the school then took place, including visiting all year groups.

Classroom environments, curriculum planning and pupil voice featured highly in the programme, and the school's outreach work was also scrutinised. The review provided recommendations for further actions and a suggested timescale for completion.

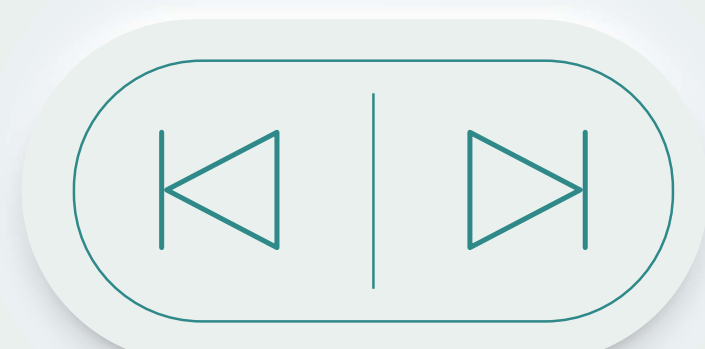
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With the start of the new academic year, our new headteacher felt it was important to build on previous successes. He shared his vision for the school, with one of the key areas for development being diversity and inclusion. CPD was delivered by Toks on equality law, language, and terminology issues, relating to protected characteristics. This provided challenge for the staff, who were able to reflect on their own individual circumstances and experiences and how they shaped the way in which they see the world. One immediate impact of this session was for the Early Years team to change the way in which they ask our new-to-school parents about their family characteristics, providing staff with crucial information on how the families see themselves in society. The training also provided the staff with an opportunity to talk openly and with more confidence about subjects that could have caused anxiety.

### October 2023

The first day of the Great Representation programme gave us the opportunity to meet a variety of colleagues from a range of educational settings. Each set of leaders were able to share where they were on their respective journeys. The visiting speakers provided us with a wonderful insight into the problems within society. Professor Paul Miller's presentation highlighted the obvious and worrying race imbalances that exist in our society. Cynthia Rowe's journey into headship was equally enlightening and shared just how hard it was to achieve her dream.

Our first school visit, to Ridgeway Academy, was enjoyable and eye-opening. Visiting a large secondary school was very much removed from our primary experience. Their journey, in raising the profile of pupils from more diverse backgrounds in a school with a majority of White British pupils, was admirable. The drive and enthusiasm of the staff members who were involved in the project were clear to see. The way in which the pupils were able to eloquently and honestly talk about their own experiences, and explain how the school had been addressing issues of race and inequality, was clear evidence of the impact of the changes that had been made.

Speaking to members of staff, we were able to see their commitment to developing diversity and representation across the curriculum. However, it was frustrating to hear of the barriers to this work, for example government guidance on the texts that are available for students to study in certain subjects.

### November 2023

The day started with Sufian Sadiq's talk. The introduction, which was full of bravado and self-assurance, set us up for an enjoyable session. He talked about the way in which he had worked his way up to the top of his profession, but it was shocking to hear of the racism he has faced in places one wouldn't expect it. The comments he received when attending a national conference for MAT leaders were shocking and really brought home how his life in modern Britain will always be one where racism isn't far away. More shocking than this, however, was the personal story he told us about his daughter. As a proud parent, all he wanted was for her to be happy at school. Her wish to be a different colour, just to fit in at her school, was like a hammer blow to him. It was disconcerting that a man who had championed race equity was now questioning his ability to make a difference.

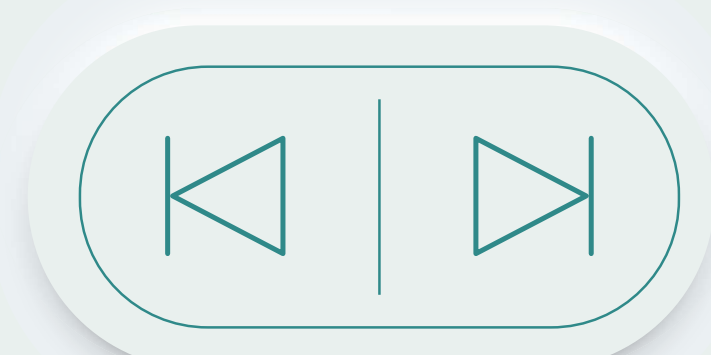
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Claire Stewart-Hall's presentation opened our eyes to White privilege. We spent time reflecting on our own experiences and understanding how our own childhood has shaped our understanding of racism. Her talk made us reflect on the global systems that have helped form our views. This did make us feel uncomfortable, but this is what is needed to try and understand how people who are not from White backgrounds face constant struggle for equality.

Our second school visit saw us travel over to Thorn Grove Primary school in Bishop's Stortford. The pupils and staff were very warm and welcoming, and the school's passion and commitment to make changes were evident. Displays around the school had been carefully thought out to ensure that all pupils, regardless of where they came from, were celebrated. The Thorn Grove Pledge was a simple but effective way in which the children were encouraged to show kindness to all, regardless of race and ethnicity. The Thorn Grove heritage board showed the diverse nature of the school and subtle changes to the curriculum and learning environments, as well as a dedication to ensure that racist incidents are dealt with effectively.

We were also able to talk to some pupils, who were open in their thoughts and feelings on the subject of diversity and racism. We could see that they have been well supported and listened to by leaders in an attempt to make the school a more diverse place.

At our own school we hosted Andrew Moffat from No Outsiders. Classes and teachers attended workshops that covered a variety of different topics related to diversity and inclusion. After this, Andrew treated staff to CPD, inspiring them and showing them how easy it is to develop an effective framework that can sit alongside the school's PSHE scheme, with little impact to teacher workload.

### December 2023

The third seminar started with visiting speaker Bennie Kara. She focused very much on the curriculum and how it can be developed. Bennie talked about making sure that a diverse curriculum is not a bolt-on – it must be a whole-school approach. This is something we are determined to implement in our school. Bennie talked about the different influences that shape children's views of society, such as family, media, peer groups and the school. It is important to make sure that we provide as diverse as possible a base of knowledge and of culture.

Bennie provided us with a range of strategies to help develop a curriculum that is relevant to modern society and would provide the pupils at school with a more diverse experience. Looking at histories that we study at Roebuck, it will be easy to try and find a single event and then ensure that we focus on a variety of different perspectives within that event. Additionally, her talk highlighted the need to try to identify opportunities to include a higher profile for the role that women played in history. Key figures in our history teaching are very male-focused, and we need to be more diverse and look at how we can include women who have had an impact on events in history. Discussion will take place at school at subject leader level to try and ensure that our curriculum becomes tailored for pupils and ensure that everything mentioned above is planned into the curriculum.

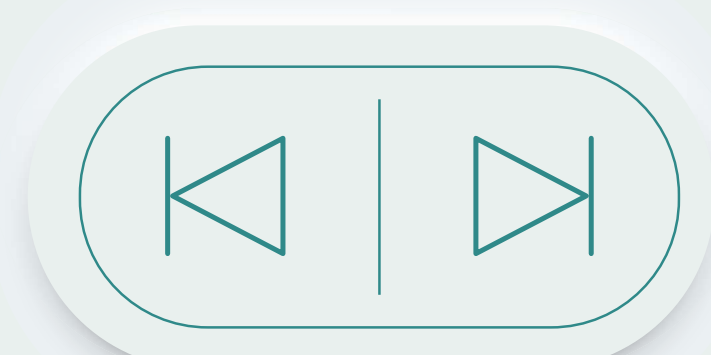
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The other speakers at the seminar were serving headteachers in a range of schools. Seb Gray talked about the need to create a safe space for discussion and how doing this can help shift a school's culture. It is essential to ensure that there is adequate consultation of stakeholders. Making sure that parents, governors and pupils were consulted and kept informed of the way in which change was being implemented at his school led to a smoother transition. Laurie O'Brian then shared his journey at Chater School, where the World Cup in Qatar in 2022 proved to be a tinderbox in surfacing tensions within his community. Once again, consultation and openness with stakeholders was the way forward to resolve the issues that emerged. Laurie engaged in open dialogue with parents and made sure that hard decisions were taken rather than shied away from. Both were examples of strong leadership and determination to work through issues.

## January 2024

This seminar began with recommendations for reading or listening, for example: *Brilliant Black British History* by Atinuke will be an ideal resource for us as leaders to share with our team and to use when improving our history curriculum. The first speaker of the day was Professor David Gillborn. He led with a hugely thought-provoking presentation that questioned many aspects of our current society, culture and policy. He explored and explained the issues of *colour-blindness* and *race evasion*, showing just how deeply they are embedded into politics and some leadership groups. David also shared his fears for the United Kingdom's future, due to its "White racial power" and racial domination structure.

David went on to talk about how this feeds into the country's education system, and about the impact that institutional racism is having on the outcomes, achievements and inclusion/exclusion of certain minority groups. As reported in *The Guardian* in 2002, David thinks that the vast majority of teachers are not racist in any crude way, but that teachers have to look at what is happening to Black students in their schools and why. We will be planning staff training in the near future to discuss some of David Gillborn's findings and to agree changes for Roebuck to ensure that we buck this educational trend.

After lunch, Toks Olusamokun facilitated a discussion around how to deal effectively with incidents of racism in school. She talked about the importance of a clear, consistent school policy that informs all staff members what actions, including when and where, should take place with each incident. The DfE "Preventing and tackling bullying" guidance will be shared amongst the leadership team, as will resources and ideas that we have researched from Hackney's diverse curriculum.

In addition to this, a staff meeting has been arranged for the summer term to feed back findings from the HFL Education "Positive representations and anti-racism in the Early Years" course. This will highlight to all teachers how important it is to create a sense of belonging for all children and how Early Years is crucial for our anti-racist journey. We will be working with staff to reflect on how our children are represented within the school community and to talk about the anti-racism ethos we are continuing to create here at Roebuck.

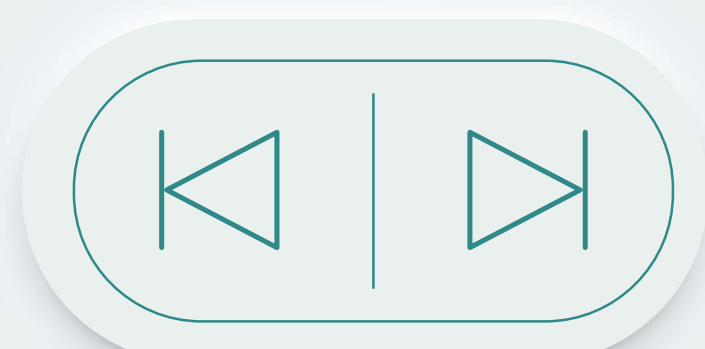
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We hosted the other three schools in our hub and were very proud of the pupils from our Dream Team, who talked openly about racist incidents in school and how the leadership team have dealt with them. It was nice to share our school's journey within the Great Representation programme. We received constructive feedback from colleagues that will help us to further improve our provision for pupils and widen the opportunities to share the diversity of our school with a greater audience.

We had already developed parental engagement at Roebuck by hosting an International Day in the autumn term, which was organised by a member of staff who has developed a strong network of supportive parents. Having listened to the staff representatives from the Margaret Wix Primary School talking through *The Wix Way* at the last seminar, we feel inspired to deliver a bigger and better International Day to share with the wider community at Roebuck. Plans are already underway to make sure that our International Day will be on a larger scale, to make it a real celebration of the cultures of Roebuck's diverse community.

The final hub group visit was to St Rose's Catholic school in Hemel Hempstead – a small, two-form-entry nursery school. We were made to feel very welcome and were able to see their commitment to making adaptations to their provision, working alongside their Catholic ethos. Leaders had worked hard to raise pupils' awareness of the growing diversity in school with their "Where do I come from?" display. The headteacher is enriching the reading experience for the children in the school through sourcing an author who makes books that are bespoke to the characteristics of the pupils in the school – an effective way of allowing children from minority ethnicities to see themselves within the reading resources.

### March 2024

Seminar 5 started with a powerful presentation by Ruth-Anne Lenga on addressing antisemitism – highly topical because of the war in Gaza. It gave a shocking insight into the plight faced by the Jewish community in this country, who have had to put up with harassment and persecution, particularly after events unfolded on 7 October. Especially concerning was the way in which the actions of Hamas on this date had been glorified and celebrated by some, as well as the huge increase in antisemitic incidents across the country.

In contrast to this, it was uplifting to hear the experience of the headteacher of Woodlands School, Rebecca Woode, who shared firsthand her personal experience of racism. Rebecca's message was to challenge all incidents of racism and to stand up for what you believe in.

Penny Rabiger's research-based presentation provided us with an insight into ways in which we could make our school anti-racist. Her work highlighted the permanence of racism in the fabric of everyday life. She challenged us to spend time learning where racism is in situ in schools. She also said that, to become more anti-racist, we would need to challenge aspects of school such as governance, leadership, school environment, the curriculum and the whole school community. Some thought-provoking questions about all these areas have led us to think further about what we need to do to make our school more anti-racist.

*Andy Mari and Krista Toal*

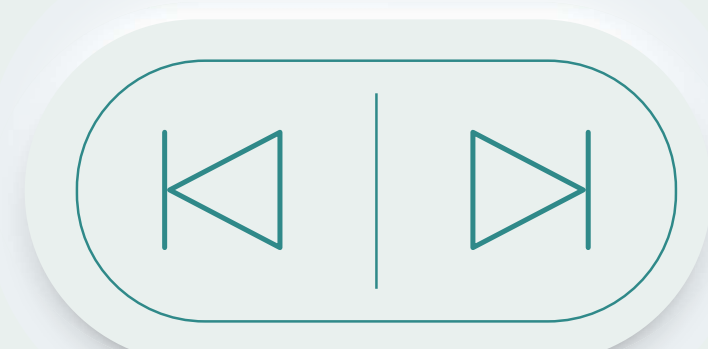
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# ROUNDWOOD PARK SCHOOL

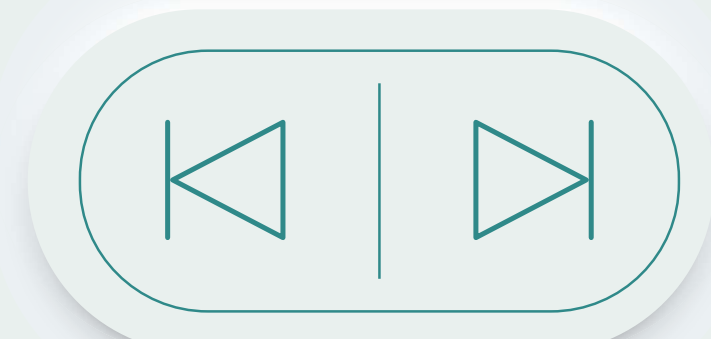
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## September 2023

Roundwood Park School is located in the north of Harpenden, within one of the most affluent postcodes in the country. Around two-thirds of our students live within this postcode, with one-third living in local villages. The school has a slightly broader ethnic diversity than the surrounding area, with 75% of students of White British heritage and a further 4% of White Other heritage.

This academic year, our sixth form has grown from 299 to 363 students, with an increased number of students applying from outside of our area, particularly from schools in Luton. One of the biggest benefits of this is a greatly increased ethnic diversity. The total number of students that have at least partial non-White heritage has increased to 206 across the school, almost half of these students being in the sixth form. With the growth of our sixth form and an increasing diversity within our student body, race equity is something we are passionate to strive towards.

Equity has always been a key part of our school's ethos. Indeed, when we asked people across our community to summarise the attributes they believed are the most important for a Roundwood Park student to possess, their responses included:

- inclusive
- respectful
- kind
- open-minded
- compassionate

However, since the pandemic, we have noticed an increase in intolerant behaviour within the student body – a pattern we know is mirrored nationally. We suspect this is driven partly by missed educational opportunities and also by an increase in unsupervised social media usage, exposing students to hateful content online. At Roundwood this has led to a rise in suspensions for racial incidents, particularly amongst younger learners, some of whom we feel have more limited understanding of the history and impact of the words they use.

To understand this better, various student voice surveys were run. Last academic year, the Quality of Life Survey (run annually in October) told us that the number of incidents in which someone was racist about the colour of a person's skin had reduced. However, the Intolerance and Discrimination Survey, new for March 2022–23, showed that nearly one in five KS3 students have witnessed racial bullying within the student body, and 45% of KS3 students had heard the use of racist language within the student body. Students told us that they would like to see stricter consequences for the use of racial slurs, and a greater focus on education around racism within the PSHCE curriculum. We have plans to repeat the Intolerance and Discrimination Survey with all year groups on an annual basis.

We are already working with Show Racism the Red Card to fill gaps in our KS3 students' knowledge. We are now planning a Make a Noise anti-bullying week, coupled with a celebration of our rich diversity through a culture day celebration.

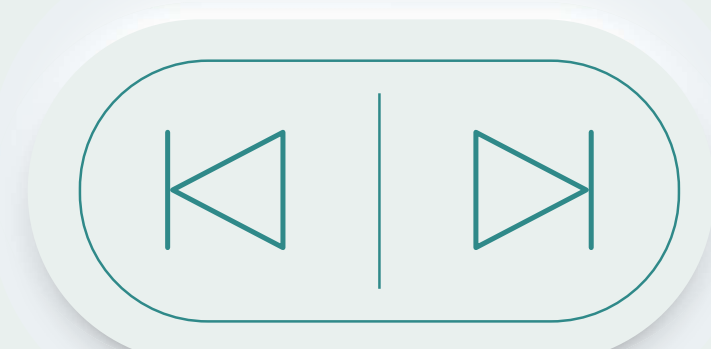
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At the first Great Representation session in September, we greatly enjoyed the speakers' keynotes. From this, we have started to have conversations with governors and the school leadership team. We are currently undertaking the race audit, as supplied by HFL Education and with the support of Toks Olusamokun, and we will discuss the findings of this as a way of stimulating further discussions and priorities.

With schools being in such a powerful and privileged position to develop change in our communities, it is imperative that we start these changes and strive to enable our students to develop those Roundwood Park attributes that will lead to racial equity.

Thus starts our Great Representation journey. This journey certainly feels daunting at the outset. Where do we start? What are our biggest priorities? However, we are ready to learn from others, ready to be made to feel uncomfortable, and ready to use our privilege to make a change.

### October 2023

In October one of the deputy heads and Hannah met with all subject leaders and looked at their curriculums. It is already noticeable that we are starting to ask different questions and look at our provision through a different lens. We clearly have much to do to bring them up to the standards of our history and English departments, which have been trail blazers in diversifying our curriculum.

We were also privileged to visit Wormley Primary School in October – the first of our group visits. It is clear that Wormley is a school that is welcoming to all but has a passion to improve things further. Around the school there are signs that all belong at the school, including:

- displays about faith
- books in the library that reflect the diversity of the community
- a strong student voice, which puts students at the heart of running the school

### November 2023

On 3 November we attended the Fielder Centre for our second face-to-face session. It was a hard-hitting day, and we were deeply affected by the lived experiences of the leaders we heard from. Sufian Sadiq's account about how the conflict in Gaza is affecting him and those around him was harrowing. We were equally moved by Shammi Rahman's journey and the ways in which she has tried to build cross-community links in both her friendships and her professional life. Both colleagues showed that they were not content to accept the status quo but wanted to change the world for the better and to have their voices heard loud and clear.

On 14 November we hosted our hub colleagues at Roundwood Park. We enjoyed the feedback we received from our group, and also the way in which our sixth formers spoke so openly about how events such as our culture day were not tokenistic but were the *loud voices* needed to signpost what we do as a school throughout our curriculum. The students were open about racist incidents that they had encountered in their lives, including at school, and how the school has dealt with them. We felt that the visit from our colleagues, as well as the programme itself, caused us to listen more acutely to the voices in our own school.

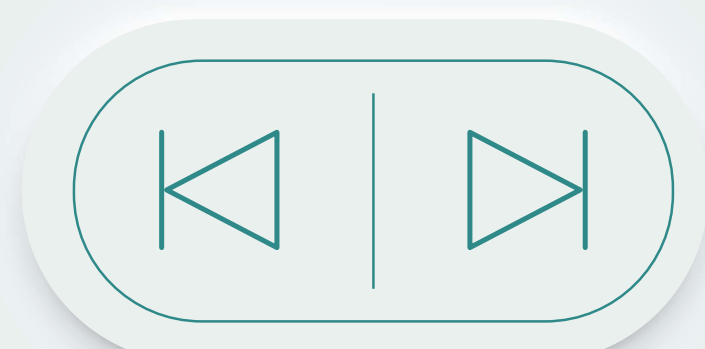
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We have a zeal to change things for the better but are thirsty for more practical ideas that will help us make lasting and permanent changes for the better. Our conclusion is that the next stage of our journey starts with recruitment and hearing more diverse voices in our leadership decisions.

## December 2023

December's seminar was an empowering session for us all as we started to explore the pragmatic approaches to making a change in our schools – moving on from the *Why* to the *How*. We left feeling more confident and excited about the journey we are on, whilst still being ever mindful of the challenges that leading change can present, especially recognising how individual each of our journeys is.

A particularly resonant discussion for us was the power of engaging with the wider community, which is vital for understanding the views and experiences of our diverse range of families. At a secondary school it feels more challenging to build strong working relationships with parents. With a lack of parent-helper positions and parent–student events, for example, it can be challenging to get to know our parents in the same way that our primary colleagues may be able to. However, the incredible power of working groups of parents, staff, governors and students, and the impact this can have on the whole community, became clear from the case studies and lived experiences we heard about. This should be something we strive to create to support and guide us through our journey, to ensure we are doing things in the right way for our community.

It was similarly very thought-provoking to hear from Bennie Kara, whose clear vision for what a diverse curriculum looks like led to some insightful discussions. We explored the principle of *usualising* within the curriculum – avoiding tokenism whilst also avoiding the development of a *normal* or *other*. It is also important to make sure diversity is fully integrated into the sequence of the curriculum and not perceived as a bolt-on that had no impact; and not to shoehorn in content with the sole purpose of ticking a diversity box. The challenge of embedding diversity throughout the curriculum and enabling students to spend time to fully explore diversity, whilst at the same time teaching the curriculum in the time constraints of GCSE and A level, is significant, but it is a challenge we feel it vital to overcome in creating an inclusive school. Bennie's words, "Building a curriculum that embraces, celebrates, highlights and foregrounds diversity is an act of equity and allyship", certainly left us wanting to make a change.

For us at Roundwood, however, it quickly became a question of where to start. With so many new ideas about fully embedding diversity in the curriculum, ideas about forming groups of parents, students, staff and students, and about addressing representation within the staffing and governing body, it is clear that we have a way to go and will find it difficult to prioritise. This must therefore be our starting point – identifying our biggest priorities and creating an action plan that will fully embed diversity throughout the school over the years to come. We are very fortunate to have been able to start the anti-racist school audit to support us in this process. Being supported by Toks will help us fully audit and prioritise our needs, develop an action plan, and review our progress over the coming months.

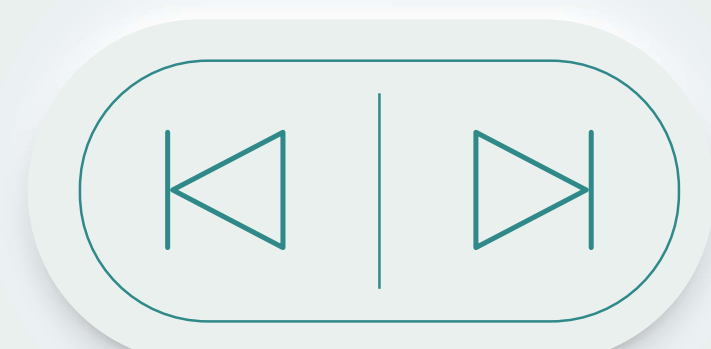
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## February 2024

We were heavily influenced by the session in January. We found Geeta Patel's testimony to be really powerful, especially the way in which she charted microaggressions throughout her life and was open about the experiences of her own children. It left us asking if racism was often unconscious and whether a greater degree of self-awareness and education for us all would lead us to organisations where all could thrive and have greater understanding of each other. Back at school we have worked with the SLT to share the findings of our anti-racism audit. We have also scheduled a governors' open day in March to start the conversation of where our next priorities will lie: in recruitment, in representation on the governing board, or with staff training.

On Valentine's Day we visited two schools in the Poppy Learning Trust. We were shown around the schools, where a clear sense of identity for each individual has been created by a project that allowed each student to have their photograph taken with a caption they had written. We talked to students who said that they were proud to be Jewish, Romanian or neurodiverse, or to be musicians or football fans. When meeting the students, it was striking to see how much pride the project had given them about who they are, and how the project has resulted in them feeling that they could be themselves in the school. We will definitely be doing something similar at RPS.

## March 2024

It is hard to believe that we are nearing the end of our Great Representation journey. We are taking time to reflect on where we are now as a school and the path we will continue on towards our goal to become an anti-racist school. As we reflect, it is plain to see that we have developed a sense of direction and clear, achievable actions to follow over the next three years, thanks to the support of the anti-racist school audit and the knowledge we have gleaned from our colleagues and speakers during the Great Representation sessions.

The steps we need to take hinge around the pivotal message of *You see me, you hear me, I belong*, which has resonated with us throughout the Great Representation programme since it was introduced by Professor Paul Miller during our first seminar. If we can ensure our students and all members of our community feel seen and feel heard, then we can work towards the ultimate goal of a feeling of belonging at Roundwood Park School.

## YOU SEE ME

To ensure students feel seen, we aim to make sure all members of the community are on board, and that we continue to *learn* together, understanding both the *Why* and the *How* of becoming an anti-racist school. We also aim to scrutinise all aspects of our school life, from progress data to behaviour, from setting statistics to staffing representation; while continually ensuring we *count*, analyse patterns and identify potential issues. Finally, we aim to ensure all students see themselves throughout the curriculum, both in class and out, and that we *usualise* each and every student's identity.

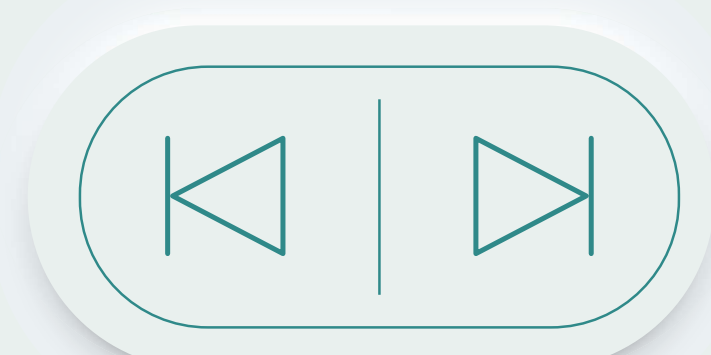
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The first part of our action plan aims to meet all of these:

	Learn	Count	Usualise
<b>Year 1 (2023–24)</b>	Introduce anti-racist school training to the whole staff (including governors), starting with the <i>Why</i> to ensure staff are onboard with whole-school focus towards race equity	Start to audit representation within the school community and patterns in data	Undertake a full curriculum audit for all protected characteristics, with particular focus through the <i>race lens</i>
<b>Year 2 (2024–25)</b>	Complete further, in-depth training with heads of departments and heads of years, followed by all staff, moving onto the <i>How</i>	Audit exam results with a full breakdown of ethnicity data versus national statistics, to identify initial concerns in the data  Continue to audit student and staff data, identifying any concerning patterns and acting on these	Design a fully diverse curriculum in all areas to ensure a good representation across the school, while ensuring this is not tokenistic or shoe-horned into curriculum maps but has genuine purpose
<b>Year 3 (2025–26)</b>	Identify additional, regular training opportunities to allow time to focus on issues/gaps that have been identified	Start to identify patterns over time, and identify any concerning data that is emerging, to build in strategies to the ongoing action plan	Deliver and embed fully diverse curriculum across all areas of the school, taking time to regularly reflect, identifying continuing gaps and adapting

### YOU HEAR ME

To ensure students feel heard, we aim to continue to use voice surveys to find out the lived experience of the members of our community, build relationships we can draw on for support, and ensure members of the community are integral to plans moving forward:

<b>Year 1 (2023–24)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to collect student voice data across the school, with the addition of capturing ethnicity data (and any other suitable protected characteristics) to analyse wider impact on different groups of students</li> <li>Implement the Intolerance and Discrimination Survey for the second year, with participation from the full student body, to allow an insight into the lived experience of our students and identify any ongoing actions</li> </ul>
<b>Year 2 (2024–25)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to collect student voice data across the school, with focus on areas of concern that arose from the previous year’s data</li> <li>Set up voice groups of parents, staff and students – open spaces to discuss the issues around race at RPS and drive forward change</li> </ul>
<b>Year 3 (2025–26)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to collect student voice data across the school, with focus on areas of concern that arose from the previous year’s data</li> <li>Continue to run voice groups of parents, staff and students, with focus on continued discussion and action planning, building ongoing relationships with members, and strengthening support for the school</li> </ul>

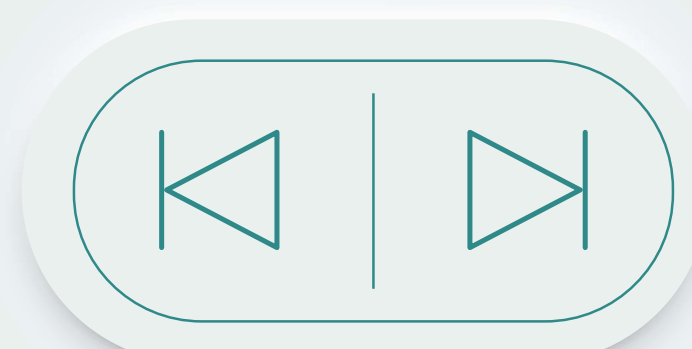
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Together, these actions pave the way to a school in which all members of the community can passionately say “I belong”. It is a journey we are proud to have started and excited to see develop.

*Hannah Semple and Alan Henshall*

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# ST PHILIP HOWARD CATHOLIC SCHOOL

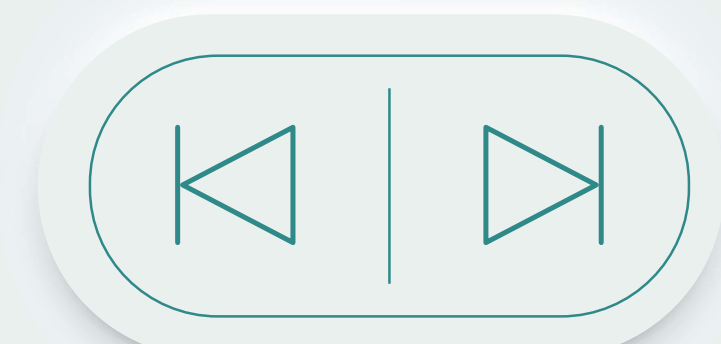
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**September 2023**

St Philip Howard Catholic School is a two-form-entry primary school with nursery, in Hatfield. Although a Catholic school, all faiths are represented within the school community. The ethnic makeup of our school has changed significantly to reflect the migration patterns of the country, as shown in the table below. The number of pupils speaking English as an additional language (EAL) is as high as 70% in the lower year groups, averages 40% in the middle year groups, and was 68% in Year 6 last year. 47 languages are spoken in the school.

Across the school we employ staff from a wide range of backgrounds, but not all adult groups are equally ethnically diverse.

	Pupils	SLT	Office	Teachers	TAs	MSAs	Govs	PTA
<b>Black</b>	185 (41%)	0	1 (20%)	2 (9%)	3 (9%)	0	3 (25%)	1(12.5%)
<b>Asian</b>	44 (10%)	0	0	0	3 (9%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (17%)	2 (25%)
<b>White British</b>	103 (23%)	2 (66.5%)	4 (80%)	17 (77%)	19 (56%)	3 (37.5%)	5 (41%)	4 (50%)
<b>White Other</b>	116 (26%)	1 (33.5%)	0	3 (14%)	9 (26%)	2 (25%)	2 (17%)	1 (12.5%)

Race and representation have been a focus for our diocese and for Catholic schools in general in recent years. We need to reflect on the experiences of our pupils and families.

We began by looking at the Early Years (EY) provision. Our minority ethnic pupils were poorly represented in displays and resources in all classes. It became a priority to ensure that BME children were represented and felt a sense of belonging. A diversity audit was undertaken across EY classes, and an action plan was written. The aim was to represent the cohort in all areas of learning.

New resources were ordered to enhance the provision: dolls, cooking utensils, musical instruments, beads, fabrics, books, religious artefacts, and globes. Staff reached out to parents to ask for family photographs and resources from the home environment such as empty food packaging and any traditional clothing that was no longer needed, which could be added to areas in the class to promote inclusivity and diversity. In their most recent visit, our HFL Education school effectiveness adviser noted the improvements and changes made.

We wanted to open up discussion with staff around race and representation and why it is so important. Aisha Thomas – director of Representation Matters – has started to work with our school. This has led us to reflect on the *Whys* of starting this journey and the depths that we need to go to when looking at all our processes in school. She has given us the tools to undertake audits at every level across the school, along with questionnaires and discussion points.

We have decided to focus on the theme of *belonging*. Our mission statement includes the phrase “We are part of God’s family”, but we want to know if children feel they belong in all senses of the word. Do they see themselves and their cultures represented in all areas of the school? Do they feel they belong from the moment they join our school community?

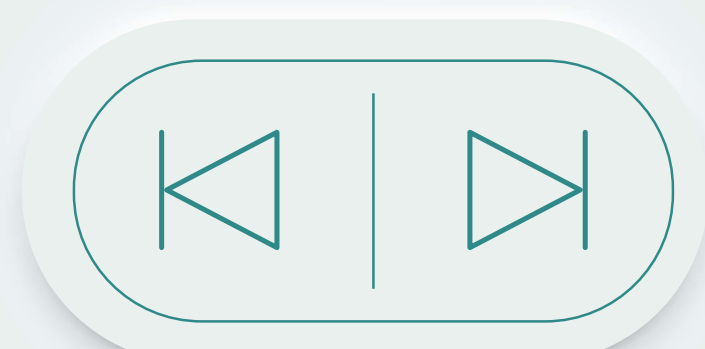
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## October 2023

Professor Paul Miller's talk at the first Great Representation seminar was very thought-provoking. He spoke about what we as leaders need to do within education to change institutional racism. He highlighted the privileges afforded to certain areas of society and, by contrast, the lack of privilege experienced by people with protected characteristics.

Cynthia Rowe's presentation was very powerful. It was a wake-up call for those of us with so many privileges to hear her lived experience and making us realise that so little has changed.

Both of these speakers highlighted the need for us to support our pupils – Black boys in particular – to negotiate the racism they will surely encounter as they get older from institutions such as the police. Their talks raised the issue of unconscious bias and racism within places such as our schools, which pride themselves on their diversity and inclusion.

Our ambition over the next year is to create a school where all children and staff see themselves represented in every area of school life. Our initial areas of focus will be:

- conducting a school audit through an anti-racist lens
- using our values as statements of inclusion
- assessing our policies and procedures
- requesting suggestions for improvements from our parent community
- completing a thorough review of all aspects of our school curriculum through an anti-racist lens
- helping staff to develop a deeper understanding of all aspects of race
- reviewing our recruitment strategy with governors and SLT
- supporting our families by developing the language to talk about racist policies, e.g. visa applications, housing
- developing our physical environment – art, artefacts, clothes, materials for displays, images, photos
- sharing and celebrating all our cultures with families

The visit from our hub schools was very useful. It highlighted that the demographics of our schools are very different. Our counterparts reaffirmed that we have come a long way with visual representations of the cultures within our school. The visit included a tour of the school, which overlapped with breaktime so that we were able to see our pupils both within the class and outside during unstructured times. Our colleagues fed back a sense that everyone belonged.

## November 2023

Day 2 of Great Representation was another amazing day of highly motivating speakers.

Sufian Sadiq is the most powerful speaker we have ever listened to. His talk really made us think about whether what we are doing and saying was enough. It was a speech that was powerful enough to keep you awake that night, reflecting on what

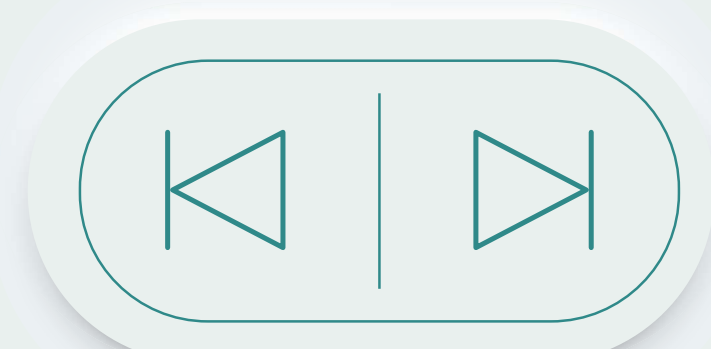
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you do and say in both a personal and professional capacity. We were saddened to hear that Sufian has cancelled much of his upcoming work around racism. After witnessing his despair during his presentation, it is easy to see why. He gave us an insight into what it's like to be him, and there were audible gasps around the room when he spoke of being mistaken for a waiter and a cloakroom attendant at a gala dinner he was attending. Do we check ourselves before assuming what we think we know? Sufian made us ask uncomfortable questions of ourselves. As he said, "People who look like me do not sit on boards of academies."

How do we behave in situations or around someone who does not conform to our norm?

We considered the impact of the media. It is all around us, all of the time, and it is frightening to realise that its messages – some subliminal, some explicit – are constantly entering our consciousness. None of us can avoid it; we are a captive audience. Sufian challenged us to really see what is being pedalled as public information and to be more aware of what is deemed to be acceptable.

The underlying message from all the speakers seen so far on this project is: Why are we still asking the same questions in 2023? Why has nothing changed? How can we make change happen?

Day 2 was just before Remembrance Day. We looked at the assembly that had been planned and, rather than glossing over what was happening in Gaza and delivering a generic message about peace, we made sure that we were explicitly mentioning Gaza in the assembly and praying for peace. We also adapted the weekly newsletter to explicitly reference Gaza. Within our Remembrance Day displays, both in the hall and outside, we lit candles to remember the children killed in Gaza.

## December 2023

At the third seminar, Bennie Kara's talk on "Diversity in the Curriculum" looked at ways to change the school curriculum to become more inclusive – to create one that embraces, highlights, celebrates and foregrounds diversity. She reminded us that diversity is not a bolt-on and that we're all different, but we're not all equal. Differences cannot be erased, e.g. telling someone, "You don't seem Asian".

Bennie talked about unconscious bias, which can be drawn from inaccurate information and assumptions, based on race, gender, disability, etc. Unconscious bias is probably one of the most difficult areas to unpick and to raise with the wider community. It's harder to spot and to root out than obvious discrimination.

Seb Gray gave a presentation entitled "How a Safe Space Can Shift a Culture". As a headteacher, he had tackled difficult and uncomfortable issues but had trusted in his staff and his own intuition to make the changes needed to create a safe space for his school community. It was inspirational to hear how the members of his school community have been using this safe space.

Melissa Lowry's talk, "Growing Up Mixed Up", was touching, and it is clear that her experiences are still raw. She found it difficult to revisit the talk she had originally presented last year, as it clearly enabled issues to resurface. One would have hoped that things had improved a year on, but this was clearly not the case.

Day 3, especially Bennie Kara's talk, has made us reflect again on the changes we

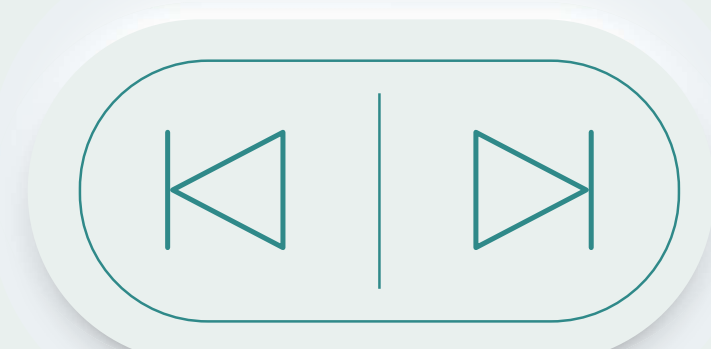
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are making to our curriculum. With subject leaders we will look at the resources and sources available for each subject and how our community is represented. We shall return to our Day 1 action: To complete a thorough review of all aspects of our school curriculum through an anti-racist lens. Where are the moments of racial joy? Who do we use as role models? Are we only looking at Africa through the lens of poverty and the slave trade?

### January 2024

Professor David Gillborn opened Day 4 with his talk “Racism and education: What’s going on and what can we do about it?” This raised the point that race is a social construct. Humans are genetically remarkably similar. He asked why we always search for a connection between race and genetics. He likened this to trying to group animals by their skin patterns – stripes, spots, short hair, etc.

He reminded us that race is given meaning in social interaction, and therefore racism cannot be ignored. He said that every decision-making point is a point of danger – who will be excluded, marginalised? This is a very sobering thought for us as leaders, that every part of what we do has the potential – whether or not we are aware of it – to affect someone for the rest of their life.

We have reviewed our reporting arrangements of racist incidents, looking deeper into the reasons a child has made an unacceptable comment. We have improved our parental input into the exploration of incidents and the follow-up work that we do with the children or class involved. This has led to children feeling much happier and more confident that the *little things* – the microaggressions – will not be ignored or tolerated.

### February 2024

At the fifth seminar, Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga from UCL’s Centre of Holocaust Education spoke to us about antisemitism and its deep roots within society. This is a particularly difficult time for her due to the war in Gaza and feelings running high across the world. She asked us to contemplate the fact that many Jewish school children in this country now attend schools manned by security guards. A delegate at the conference shared how her own children, who attend a Jewish school, have to hide their uniforms as they travel to and from school for fear of reprisals.

Ruth-Anne spoke of how Jews are always held accountable for events that happen across the world. She said that no other community is held accountable for the atrocities instigated by their countries in the same way. This was a sobering and pertinent thought at this time.

Penny Rabiger, in a talk entitled “Creating the Anti-racist School”, said there is a difference between White people and Whiteness, and it is Whiteness that we need to push against. Racism is everything, everywhere, all the time. We need to accept that racism is in everything and the mantra should be: *Diagnose – consult – act – diagnose – consult*.

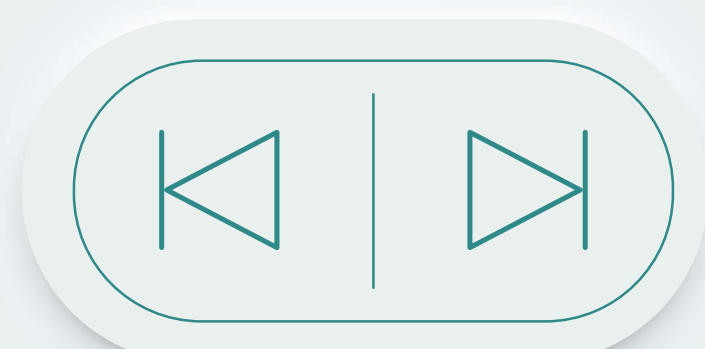
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Penny suggested that schools need to consider all of the following:

- Governance, leadership and strategy – is there an EDI governor in place?
- Are *all* policies looked at through the lens of racism?
- Do you monitor and improve how you deal with racist incidents?
- Is racial literacy treated on the same level as safeguarding?

As a Catholic school, we focus the majority of our religious teaching on our Catholic faith. Within this, many images and artefacts often have a White European bias. We have now looked at and developed a bank of resources for RE, using images from around the world.

We have booked whole-school workshops to develop an understanding of Judaism. This has been a regular focus of ours for many years and we have a wonderful relationship with the person who delivers these fascinating, practical, educational workshops. In music the hymns and songs that we are using are from around the world.

We now have a representation champion on our school governing body. This is to make sure that policies and decisions we make reflect what we are trying to change. He has come into school and spent a morning with our senior leadership team, to develop his understanding of what this course is about and how his role can impact our governors going forward.

### March 2024

Reflecting on Day 6, we have had some very interesting discussions about texts that can be used in schools to raise awareness of race and ethnicity. A text like *Coming to England* by Dame Floella Benjamin can be used as a whole-school text and fits well with our focus as a school on belonging – one of our core values.

Race cuts across every other protected characteristic. One suggestion was studying artists linked to the protected characteristics. We have booked an artist in residence for two days this term, working on our school values. As part of his commission, we want the piece of work to reflect our theme of belonging and to make sure all of our community feels represented and seen.

We heard a quote from Archbishop Desmond Tutu: “There’s only one way to eat an elephant – a bite at a time.” This reminds us that we need to point at the elephant in the room!

This project is not something that finishes after the year – it is just the starting point. The significant difference it has made to us as leaders is that we now look at the decisions we make through a different lens. There is still lots of work to complete.

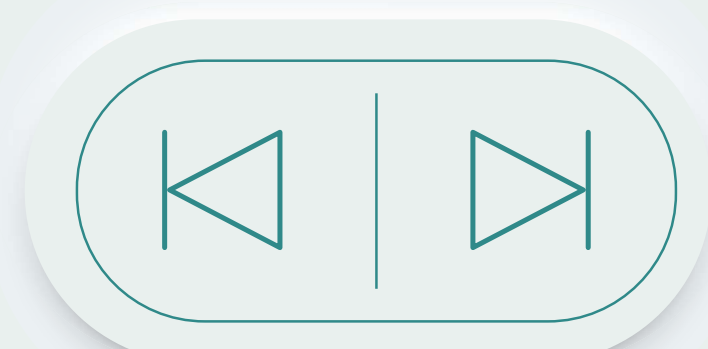
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Going forward, our next three major actions are:

1. The development of our curriculum

We are working as a whole school to reflect on:

- the topics we study
- the resources we use
- the people we use as examples – developing the use of Black British examples rather than American, for example
- the books that are available in the classroom and also for a class focus
- a diversity slant for World Book Day next year

2. Staff involvement

We need to make sure that this work doesn't get stuck with leaders. We have another CPD session with all of our teachers, with a focus on *What classroom teachers can do*.

3. Parental involvement

We want to involve parents in reflecting on what we need to provide as a school to increase everyone's sense of belonging. We are seeking increased engagement with groups of parents who feel isolated or excluded from our school community. We would like to establish a working party to help with this work.

It is a very exciting phase for our school. The changes to our community have been rapid and, although we have made great steps forward, we know that this work will continue to evolve.

*Mairead Waugh and Sue Gajjar*

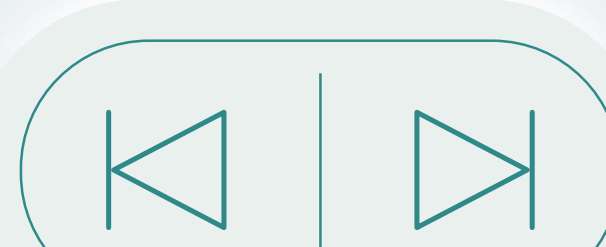
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# ST MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

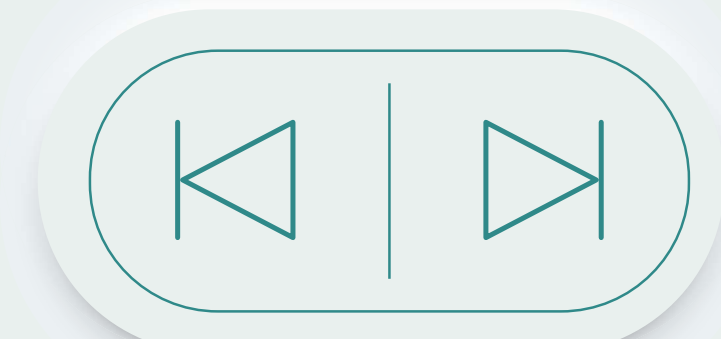
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## September 2023

St Mary's is an 11–18 Catholic secondary school in the market town of Bishop's Stortford, East Hertfordshire. There are 1,257 pupils on roll. Last year the school celebrated its 125-year anniversary. We are one of eight schools in the St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust.

Our school is truly diverse in nationalities: 51% of students are White British and 49% are from minority ethnic groups. The largest minority group, at 16%, is Black African, and there are over 17 ethnicities represented in the school community. 21 different home languages are spoken, from Polish to Italian to Akan (a dialect of Ghana). Racists incidents are low; however, there are pockets of visible divides between diverse groups of students. Racism is addressed in our PSHEE curriculum, assemblies, and cultural capital days. Topics addressed in the PSHEE curriculum range from diversity and personal identity to recognising and preventing discrimination, understanding cultural identity and intersectionality, marginalisation, and privilege.

Our house saints are representative of our diverse community. We have seven house saints in total: St Anne from Dunmow; St Kolbe – a Polish Catholic Priest; St Josephine Bakhita – a Sudanese woman; St Óscar Arnulfo Romero, who was born in El Salvador; St Thérèse of Lisieux; St Thomas More; and St Joseph.

In pockets across our curriculum, we are addressing representation. Some examples include:

- The history department has woven the book *Black and British* by David Olusoga into the KS3 curriculum. This book looks at Black people in Britain's past centuries and the contribution they made to society.
- Art uses Indian mandalas as a springboard for a Zodiac Patterns project.
- The library is increasing its number of books from diverse nationalities.
- Food served in the refectory has reflected some nationalities within our school.
- A gospel choir practises on a weekly basis.

We are keen to embark on the Great Representation programme to dissolve this divide and to foster amongst our students a greater social responsibility. We are ambitious in our desire that students not only achieve academically but also have a strong moral compass. Our Catholic faith helps us to view each other in the image of God, and see beyond race, gender, and ethnicity. We look forward to reflecting on where we are as a school and being supported with educational literature and best practice, so that we continually shape our students and wider school community.

While our school staff profile is racially diverse, this is not the case within our senior leadership team, and so we face the challenge of viewing this project through the lens of White privilege.

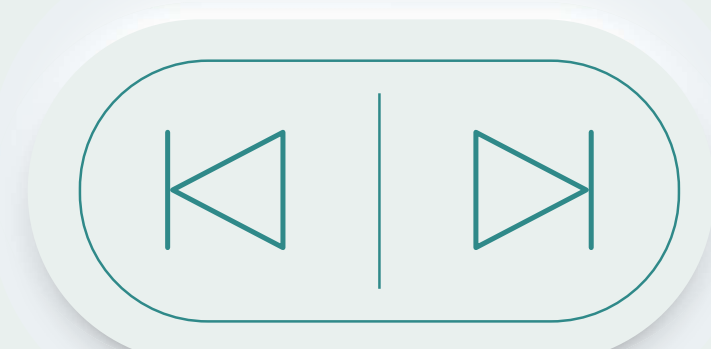
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By participating in the Great Representation programme, we hope to:

- decolonise the curriculum, identifying the biases and limitations of current curriculum content
- address any race inequality in our schools
- develop confidence in appropriate language around race and identity
- celebrate diversity of the ethnic groups within the school, ensuring they are well represented in the school community and through leadership roles
- identify from data any ethnic groups whose attainment is concerning, and address underlying causes

Ultimately, we want to ensure greater fairness in society, and nurture the values held by students that will anchor their thoughts, words and actions for the future.

### October 2023

One of the first things we were asked at the first session was “How brave did you feel getting out of bed this morning?” I cannot honestly say I had been thinking about the importance of the day. I was rather more concerned with navigating morning traffic to get to the venue on time. However, by the end of the day, I had a real mind shift: How brave do I feel? I’m going to have to feel very brave, as this is vital work to be done. I feel nervous just thinking about the journey ahead, fearful of making mistakes, not having the professional knowledge around racial equity, and maybe unknowingly upsetting people in the process. However, I am resolute in my knowledge that there needs to be change within me, the context and in society.

Already I feel more equipped to address this issue. I understand more about *privilege*, and that we all have certain privileges. As leaders, we have the power to make change and influence others. As a White British, able-bodied, English-speaking person, I have lots of privileges that were previously unseen. I now see these privileges as a means to effect change rather than something to feel ashamed about.

We were reminded that we need to know why we do this work. *Because my headteacher asked me* is not enough of a reason. On reflection, I am leading this work because I want to use my privileges to ensure fairness and equity amongst our students. All students should be able to be happy and successful, no matter their race, gender or ethnicity. I am going to view more of the work in the school through a lens on race equity and diversity.

In our school setting, our privilege is that 93% of the student population are of Catholic faith. I think this is the biggest lever for us. We believe in *Imago Dei*. This means that we are made in the image of God – not in a physical sense but in a moral and spiritual sense. This dovetails with our school values of love, respect and flourishing. If we love and respect God, then, as we are made in the image of God, we will be this way with others regardless of differences.

Our next step is to work with curriculum leaders to reflect on our curriculum design so that diversity is represented. I have read the SOAS University of London “Learning and Teaching Toolkit”, which briefs leaders on what decolonising the curriculum might entail. I plan to create a version for our school to share with subject leaders so that an audit can identify and celebrate where this is already occurring and how to go about development.

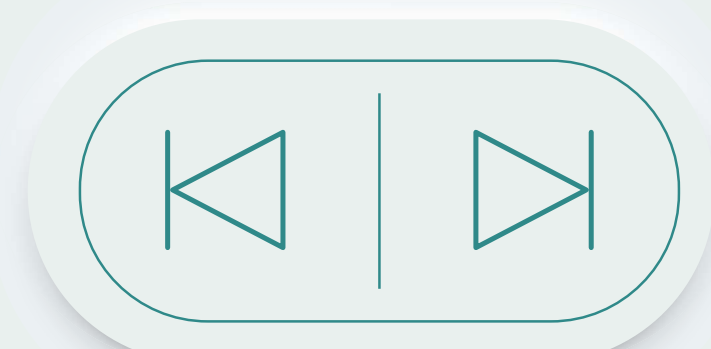
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I have shared details of the Racial Justice, Equality and Diversity workshops, delivered by the Diocese of Westminster, with the governors of the school, and I hope to meet with them to discuss this and gather their feedback and ideas.

I am leading a workshop at our Teaching and Learning Conference on challenge and racial equity. When I feel more knowledgeable about what we already do, I then want to consult with the students and discover more about their experiences and what they would like to see change.

My aims are:

- that there is a shift in myself, in terms of both knowledge and behaviours
- that there is an increased awareness from all stakeholders: governors, staff, students, parents and the local community

Key actions will be:

- to audit the library books to gather evidence of representation
- to document our work through a large school display of our commitment so it is visible for the school community and visitors
- to review our policies and information about the school for applicants, to make it more enticing for BAME teachers and leaders

We visited Chater Junior School in Watford as a hub group. The school values permeate the schemes of learning, and students could easily link this to their learning. The video on their school website is an effective way of communicating the school's commitment to upholding British values whilst celebrating diversity. The visit helped me to crystallise the importance of sharing the voices of all adults with links to the school, in living out the aims of the school.

### November 2023

We left the second seminar feeling empowered. There were two main reflections from the day:

1. In Claire Stewart-Hall's seminar, she highlighted that it does not matter who you are – whatever your race, gender, or age, you can lead the racial justice agenda in your school.
2. In Sufian's Sadiq's seminar, we experienced a rollercoaster of emotions as Sufian took us on his journey of what it is like to walk in his shoes. My main thoughts were about how we shine a spotlight on the contribution people make to British society; and how to change the narrative on what it means to live out = British values in our day-to-day actions.

Since the seminar, we have felt compelled to address at school the conflict in the Middle East. Knowing how to navigate this in a way that didn't show political preference or negative views of either side proved challenging. We decided to use the Red Wednesday Campaign, led by the Aid to the Church in Need (ACN). The aim of the campaign is to take action to help Christians in Africa who suffer targeted violence for their loyalty to Christ. We wanted to use the opportunity through assemblies to address this suffering as well as the Middle East conflict. We decided to link these two situations via the crucial aspect of human rights.

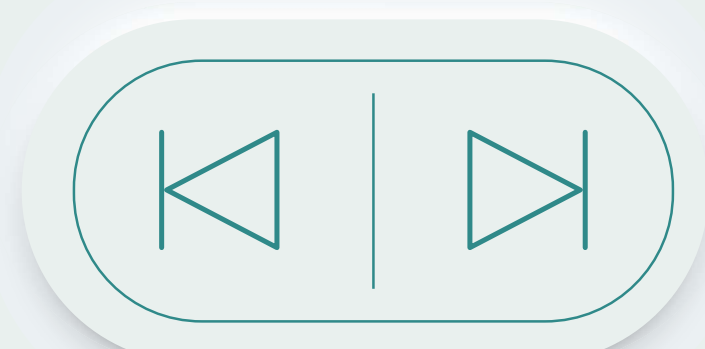
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Both the Red Wednesday Campaign and the conflict in Gaza display numerous human rights violations, and this common theme was shared with the students. We left students with the action to not only pray for peace and justice but to be aware of these global events and practices and how they influence our lives.

The second part of the term has seen us reflecting on the actions we can take to address racial injustice with staff. We considered the extent to which staff are aware of racial injustice and how this could be reflected in the curriculum. We decided to offer a voluntary workshop at our Teaching and Learning Conference on challenging curriculum representation. In this workshop we utilised the slides from the first Great Representation seminar, which demonstrated race inequality in the UK. We then went on to look at the changing demographics between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, and we showed that the UK is becoming more ethnically diverse. Whilst the percentage of people of colour living in Hertfordshire is lower than the national picture, it has grown proportionally between the census dates. We felt this was important to signpost so that we could understand the school context more.

When we drilled down to areas within the whole of Hertfordshire, East Hertfordshire – where our school is located – was the least diverse of the ten districts across all four broad ethnic groups. It is also well below the average for Hertfordshire, East of England and England. In stark contrast to this, our student population is 49% Black, Asian and minority ethnic. We are a diverse school, which raises the question *Does our curriculum truly represent our school community?* We asked staff to reflect on where in the curriculum they feel there was representation and what their actions would be following the workshop.

We also reflected after the day that we wanted to raise awareness of racial injustice with the students. Through discussions, we formulated a plan to host a Racial Justice Week in early January. 28 January 2024 is Racial Justice Sunday in the Catholic liturgical calendar. We are now in the process of planning this week to raise awareness of racial justice and celebrate our school's diversity.

### December 2023

In preparation for Racial Justice Week, I led a breakfast seminar with the subject leaders, where I shared some of the data around racial inequality in the UK. We studied the data for Hertfordshire and many commented that our school demographic is vastly different to the Hertfordshire data. This was a helpful mechanism in bringing to the fore the discussion around curriculum representation. As part of this meeting, I asked all subject leaders to create a starter activity for Racial Justice Week to show how they tackle this within their curriculum. A longer-term action was for them to identify what they currently have planned in their curriculum and what might be their next steps in curriculum development.

My main reflections from the seminar were around dealing with racist incidents. The scenarios we were given to discuss provided a useful opportunity to discuss the most effective ways to address the incidents. Whilst racist incidents are extremely low in our school, the activity led me to reflect on whether we have a model letter and if any improvements could be made to it, based on the exemplar that was shared.

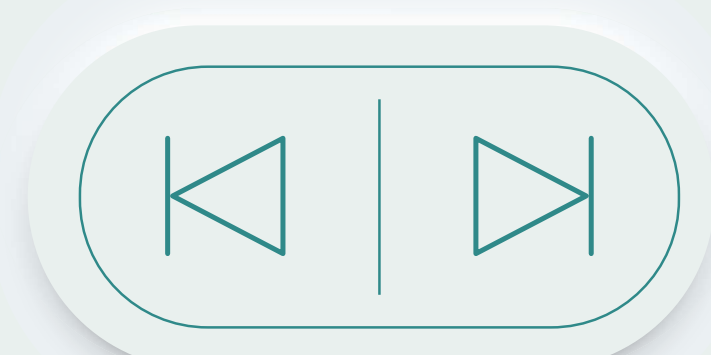
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## January 2024

January was an exciting month in school. We had decided that Monday 22 January would be the start of our inaugural Racial Justice Week, culminating in Racial Justice Sunday on the 28th. A group of Year 12 student leaders approached me, as they had heard I was looking for support with planning the week and had some ideas for how they could support. From this I devised a plan for the week, whereby all members of the school community could participate.

We used several internal systems to promote Racial Justice Week. The students were keen to lead a Culture Show and set about promoting it and running auditions. I was delighted when they presented me with a list of student participants from across the school, who wanted to highlight the national dress and dance of their cultural heritage. We devised a rehearsal schedule and set a date for the show towards the end of the half-term.

One of the leading events was creating a large-scale Imago Dei collage. Imago Dei means "made in God's image". The art department created an outline of the words, and every student in the school contributed an inking of their thumbprint. This symbolised that not only are we unique but that, through our actions, we are God's representatives on earth. We also reached out to the eight primary schools within our Catholic Academy Trust, by creating postcards and a video to share with them. In the postcards we asked them to share their thumbprints and to reflect on how they make people feel welcome in their school.

Every morning of the week, our senior prefect team – consisting of the head and deputy head boy and girl in year 13 – led the assembly for all year groups. They focused on the theme of "Seeing one another in the life of the church". They read scripture promoting the ideology that, as Catholics, we look at the internal features and not the external features of individuals. They displayed some of our diverse saints such as Josephine Bhakita (a house saint); and also St Perpetua and St Felicity, who were from North Africa. They then led prayers for fairness and justice in society.

Every Monday in form time there is a new *word of the week*. For Racial Justice Week our word of the week was *multiculturalism*. Students engaged with the origins of the word and explored its meaning, identified synonyms, and discussed the benefits of a multicultural society.

Our catering team in the refectory also came on board and served a meal from a different part of the world each day; we had rice dishes from Africa, a noodle dish from Asia and a Chimichurri from South America. The refectory was also decorated in flags from around the world to express our diverse school heritage.

Finally, I asked all staff to use their starter activity to promote racial justice through their curriculum. Although we have many elements already established in our

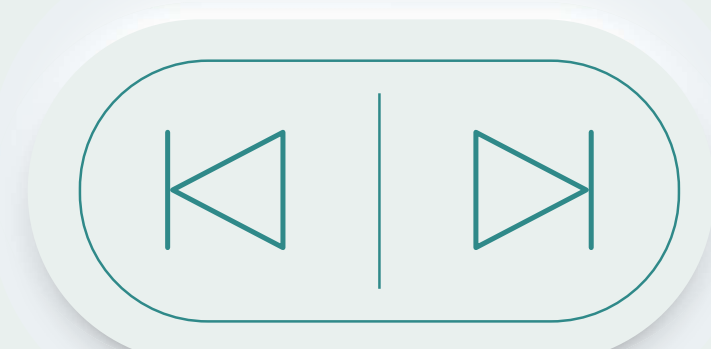
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curriculum, I wanted to use this time to spotlight racial justice. Examples of how this was achieved include:

- In geography, staff tackled the question, *Do map projections represent places fairly?* Students were asked to explore the different representation of countries through the Mercator and Peters' map projections and to consider how some represent places with greater importance.
- In English lessons, students explored the poem "Windrush Child" by John Agard and reflected on the poet's intentions for the reader.
- Psychology A level students explored culture bias at the Oscars Award ceremonies.
- In PE, students were asked to debate the statement *Sport is Fair*, exploring representation and access to sports globally.

Finally, the library held a Racial Justice Week literary event. The library staff added to their already extensive collection of fiction books that show greater representation with a special display of these books. They explained how the books can help the reader to empathise with those suffering from discrimination, giving them a voice. A poster about this library display was given to all form tutors to display in their form rooms, and students presented their book reviews. Students spoke about the book *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.

## February 2024

In February we held our Culture Show. This was led by a group of Year 12 students, who were keen to celebrate their cultural diversity, and it was performed twice in the day to different year groups. I set the students organising the event the challenge of seeking out a wide range of cultures to incorporate into the show. The buzz from the students during rehearsals was infectious, and feedback from staff and students was really positive. The final show consisted of eight countries being represented, through dance, poetry, music and fashion.

One participant reflected on the impact of the show: "Being involved in the cultural show helped me embrace my culture through dance. I was part of 'The Youngers' dance group, which involved dancing to songs from the Afro-Caribbean diaspora."

One of the main reflections I took from the show was that we need to cast the net even wider and find further inroads into the student population to make sure that any future events are truly representative of the entire student population. I also want to build on the sense of leadership instilled in those students who led the show and make them racial justice advocates for future events.

Our Great Representation session in February was focused on antisemitism. The talk from Ruth-Anne Lenga was enlightening in its perceptions of Jewish people globally through times of conflict. We were asked to reflect on racism affecting White people. Is there a perception that all Jewish people are people of privilege? A participant on the Great Representation course shared that since the conflict in Gaza, their children hid their uniform when travelling to and from school as they attended a Jewish School and it was not safe to display their Jewish identity.

We also hosted the school leaders from our hub group. It was a proud moment, showing outsiders to our school and demonstrating some of the progress we have made before and during the Great Representation project. The students who led the school tours were vocal about our school cohesion and could share their experiences of our Culture Week.

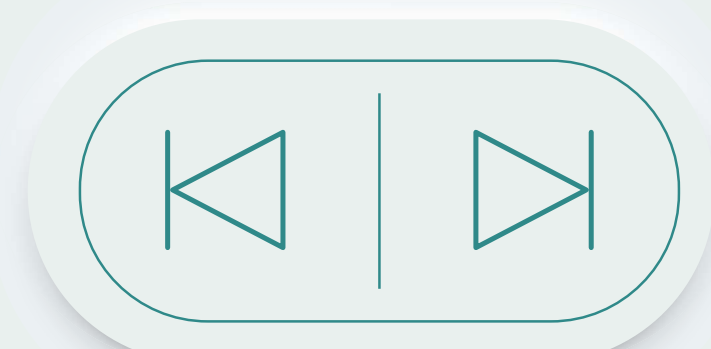
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## March 2024

Our final session gave us more time for reflection. We discussed what we thought were the biggest challenges facing our individual settings. On reflection, I think it is having a lack of INSET time to share the research on racial literacy and provide staff with a platform to discuss this, and to consider how it impacts their areas of responsibility. It can be difficult to gain slots on the INSET schedule, but an action moving forward is to include in our staff induction programme a slot on how we celebrate diversity and ensure inclusivity across all areas of our school. I also hope to return to discussions on the curriculum with our subject leaders. I intend to enhance representation across the curriculum, and I also aim to increase student voice.

My thoughts turn to upcoming events such as Year 6 transition day and how we can adapt the postcards that we send out to our trust schools so that right from the very start of the secondary school journey they are living out the values that support great representation at St. Mary's Catholic School.

*Claire McGrath*

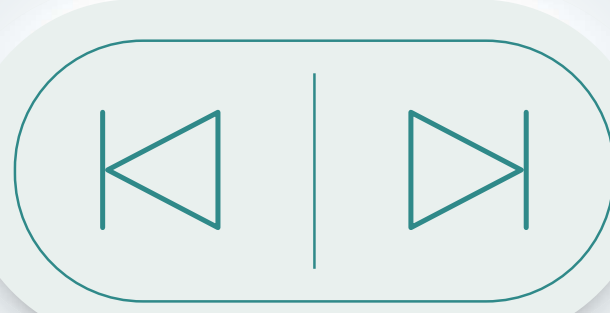
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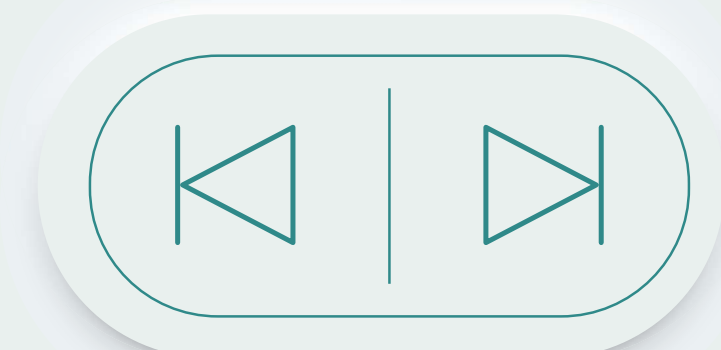
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# ST ROSE'S CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL

## September 2023

At St Rose's we are working on our whole-school curriculum and ensuring that representing the community we serve is high on the agenda. As an infant school we are the start of the education journey for our pupils, and it is vital we ensure that we represent diversity from the moment the children arrive in Nursery. Having been inspired by various speakers at both the Hertfordshire Headteacher Conference and the Westminster Diocesan Headteacher Conference, the importance of children seeing themselves represented positively within the curriculum was a key message that we want to bring into St Rose's.

We already have some examples of diversity within the curriculum and have purchased a range of books that better reflect our community. However, after a recent lesson on Rosa Parks, we spoke to a parent of one of our Year 2 children, who had questioned why we only taught about Black people who had overcome difficulty because of the colour of their skin. This immediately made us examine our curriculum more closely and realise that we were perhaps being tokenistic in our approach.

The demographic of our school community is changing. Although the majority of pupils (55.6%) are White British, this is a trending declining number. Our next largest group is Black African (8%), but we also have a growing number of pupils who identify as Other Black, White and Black African, White and Black Caribbean and Other Mixed (as well as a growing number of Chinese, and Other Asian pupils). Our staff and governors are not very ethnically diverse, and we therefore concluded that we needed to reach outside of this group to ensure that we could represent the community in a positive way. When the opportunity to join Great Representation arose, the assistant head and headteacher were keen to be part of this programme.

As part of our curriculum plans for this year, we have begun to introduce a core book spine of books that will be shared in each of our classes across the year. We used Pie Corbett's Reading Spine for the basis of this. However, it was evident that there wasn't a diverse range of books included within this list that would allow the children to see themselves reflected within the stories. This led to a discussion with staff around how we ensured that we were able to provide children with a more diverse selection of books.

After attending the first Great Representation session, we sent out an online questionnaire to parents. We felt it was really important to gather information that was directly relevant to our community about important dates and celebrations that are marked at home, as well as any traditional tales, stories or poems that families share, so that we can incorporate some of these within our school resources. We are currently collating these results and will use them on the next stage of our journey.

## October 2023

We are focusing on how our curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of our community and reflect the learners we have in our school. In creating responsible citizens of the future, our children need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum as well as gaining an understanding of life from a different perspective. With our subject leaders we have begun evaluating our curriculum this half-term and have dedicated time and finances to enable this to happen with haste.

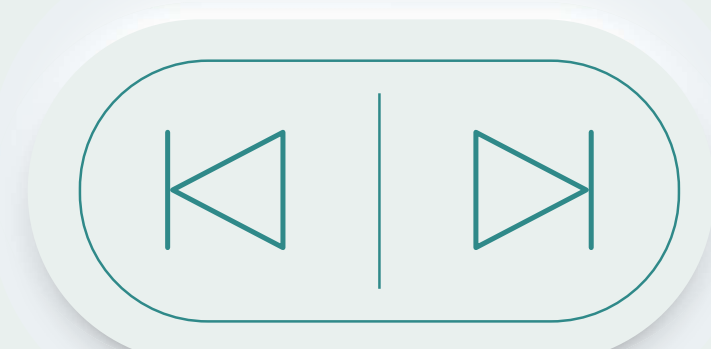
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We use Kapow for the curriculum of our foundation subjects. This resource is a good starting point and models a sound representation of diversity in some subjects (e.g. art, DT) but lacks it in others (e.g. history). As a result, we have begun digging deeper into the content and coverage of our schemes. As well as mapping out the key skills, we have now linked that work to including the specific names of people that will be studied in each year group to ensure equity and a greater representation for all.

Our visit to Ridgeway Academy was really useful, as we were able to speak to a range of pupils and staff about their experiences. They were very open and shared things that worked well and also things that still needed development. It was really useful to be able to hear from older students about what could have been different for them in their early years, as we could see what steps we could make in our infants setting.

Back at our school, we are taking part in the early reading project and were particularly pleased to see that, during our audit, it was noted that we had a strong selection of diverse books, which allow the children to see themselves reflected. We have now begun to consider how we will move forward with this to ensure that all children are being exposed to books showing a range of diverse characters, to allow them to have a greater understanding of life from a different perspective. We are working on a book spine for each class and will ensure that these include a range of diverse books that staff will be expected to share with the children. We will begin by allocating the books we currently have in school but will look at how we can develop the resources available.

### November 2023

It was interesting to listen to Claire Stewart-Hall speak about her personal life experiences in Seminar 2. She was able to talk about her own White privilege and encouraged us to reflect on our own privileges before moving on to thinking about the parts of our lives where we may have experienced discrimination. This spurred us into thinking of the prejudgements often made by staff when receiving pupils from a known family. It is vital that we do not let privileges and disadvantages blur our thoughts and feelings towards a child. All of our children are unique and special and have the right not to be judged.

Sufian Sadiq introduced himself as an arrogant, charismatic leader – and he did not disappoint! Sufian's credentials are most impressive, and he has worked extremely hard to progress in his field. He also gives up a lot of his time to charity work and supporting institutions that improve our education services. Sufian shared the *casual racism* he had experienced personally while growing up, which he “allowed” as he wanted to be “accepted”, or because that behaviour had been normalised.

It was sad to hear of the racist incidents that Sufian has experienced throughout his life and is still experiencing now. The outwardly successful and confident man that introduced himself to us at the beginning was in fact a broken father, who was exhausted and done with expecting the world to be fair. In his words, he did not believe that the world is capable of this. His words and genuine tears really pulled on our hearts but also our heads. Sufian may have felt done with fighting on that day, but it is important that we are not.

Shammi Rahman continued Sufian's theme by giving her opinion that “silence has not protected me or kept me safe”. She, too, was honest in sharing uncomfortable life experiences of racist behaviours.

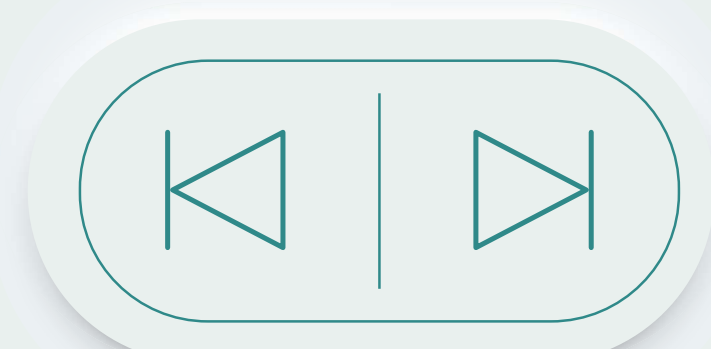
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It was enlightening to know that Shammi's positive experiences, and now special memories, are predominately down to the educators that influenced her in having open and honest conversations, and which encouraged her to pursue further education. It helped us to remember why we started this project in the first place – because, as educators, we want to be part of our pupils' history and to always be their champions.

As a Catholic school our ethos is that we are all part of one family – God's family. This has always been key to staff when supporting our young, infant-aged children in understanding that we are all different and unique but that as a family we must protect and look after each other, no matter what. The lived experiences shared in Seminar 2 have reminded us why this is still so important today. "True worship is to work for justice" Isaiah 58:5.

In school we have been able to use vouchers awarded for our book fair sales to begin to source some additional books for our reading spine. These will go into our essential reads for each year group to ensure that we offer a range of characters to our children.

### December 2023

The first session of the day at Seminar 3 was led by Bennie Kara and was on "Diversity in the Curriculum". Her honest and critical approach to reviewing her own curriculum really helped us to see how we could begin looking at ours. Like Bennie, we started looking at the representation shown through our history curriculum (in Key Stage 1). It became clear, very quickly, that many of the key figures – the people we are saying are significant enough to study – were White and male. This is replicated across other curriculum subjects too. Bennie advised avoiding the term *normal* and using *usual* instead, when examining narratives in the curriculum. Our intent is for our curriculum to truly represent the pupils we teach. We want our children to recognise the familiarity – the *usuality* – in what they are taught.

Bennie asked the question, "Does the curriculum include positive representation of marginalised groups?" This was a question we had already been looking into. A Year 2 parent recently shared the view that her son no longer wanted to learn about "Black history" as the people studied had always been subjected to oppression or had to overcome hardship and discrimination. Even when the outcome may have been life-changing for the better, we were still not providing all of our pupils with *usual* positive role models, who they could aspire to be like. This is an area we have begun to address immediately with our subject leaders. A review has been completed and changes have already been made. The EYFS curriculum has been highlighted as a real success in terms of the great representation that it provides our youngest pupils. It is now the focus to continue this good work into Key Stage 1.

We looked again at the results from the parent survey that we sent out and found that it did not provide us with enough information. On reflection, perhaps we had not explained enough about the reasoning behind it to encourage parents to respond. We will relaunch this in the new year, ensuring that we explain in more depth the importance of the data we are collecting and how it will be used in school.

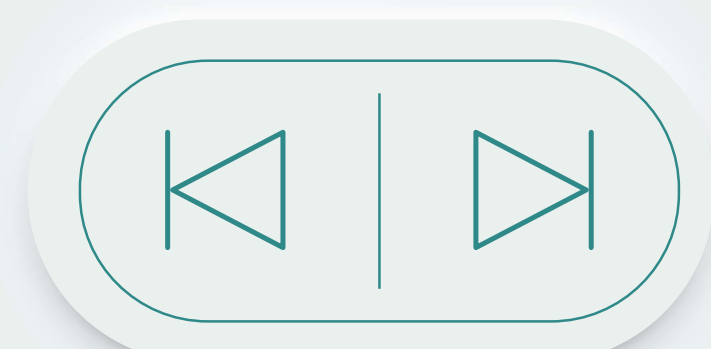
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## January 2024

In the Seminar 4 session, we heard from Professor David Gillborn, who spoke about “Racism and education – What’s going on and what can we do about it?” and shared data around the attainment of White versus Black Caribbean pupils. His line graph showed that exam success for White pupils is significantly higher than for Black Caribbean pupils. The lines followed near enough the same path, so when there was dip for one group, the other followed. His graphs showing permanent exclusion rates demonstrated clearly that Black Caribbean pupils are excluded in significantly higher numbers than White pupils.

The next part of his talk focused on the sense of belonging, which is a theme that has recurred through many of our sessions. Everyone has a right to feel like they belong and to feel welcome and included in school. As an infant school, it can sometimes feel as though the children are too young to fully understand this concept. However, many people have vivid memories of an incident of exclusion that happened to them at a young age, which stays with them for a long time. We have a duty to ensure that we foster a sense of everyone feeling like they belong, are valued and can see themselves reflected in school life.

We were lucky enough to receive a donation from our PTA that allowed us to purchase a copy of the remaining books on our reading spine. This has enabled us to ensure that we have a range of books that represent some of the different heritages we have in school. These books will be read to the children over the course of the year, ensuring that we have an ethnically diverse range of characters within the books we read.

This term our biggest piece of work has been around identifying the heritage of our pupils. We have done this by giving families details of the Great Representation programme and explaining why we would like to collect this data. So far there has been a reasonable response, and the data received has allowed us to understand more about our pupils and how we can recognise and celebrate key events, anniversaries and festivals that are significant to them.

From this we have been able to start creating a list of dates that we should be aware of such as important feast days and national days of celebration. Although it may not be possible to celebrate each one with a theme day, we will be able to ensure that they are acknowledged for pupils and included in our calendar. Plans are already in place to celebrate Chinese New Year with a themed lunch and activities in school. We will be reaching out to parents to help us to plan and deliver these activities.

## February 2024

We have now completed the first draft of our revised curriculum, to include and showcase diversity, and to represent our school community. We have purchased additional fiction books, which will support this and allow the children to read books set in different countries. Through conversations with Keisha at Imagine Me Stories, we were able to purchase a bespoke set of books that champion characters from a range of backgrounds, as well as stories with a variety of settings. Many of these are books that are less well known but are now part of our school library.

We used the opportunity of consultation evening to invite parents to complete our survey and have now had about 50% of the school’s families respond.

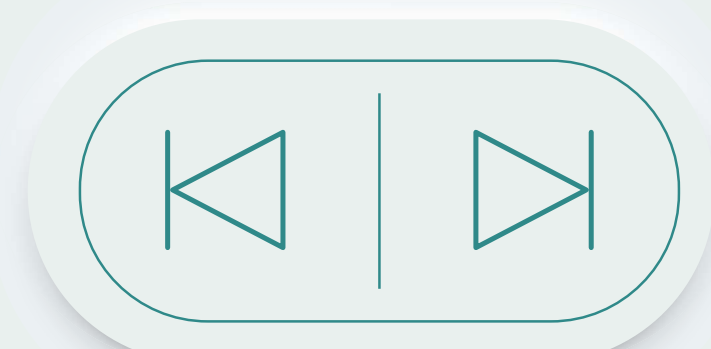
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We have used the data to create a display, showcasing where our families are from and the languages they speak. This has allowed us to discover new information about our children, and the response from them to the display has been really positive. We have had some children come up to us to tell us where their families are from, and one child approached me to show me his books that he uses to learn Chinese outside of school.

The survey has also allowed us to look at many different international dates that are important to our families, and we have incorporated some of these into our school calendar. We were delighted to celebrate Chinese New Year; all of the children were invited to wear something red, and we had a themed lunch. Using the results of the survey, we approached one of our parents, who came in to talk to the classes that their children are in. When speaking to the children in the celebration assembly, our Year 2 children were able to explain that we celebrated Chinese New Year as some of our friends are from China. Feedback from parents has been very positive, and they are enjoying the things we are doing in school to recognise the importance of the heritage of our families. We plan on using the survey when we meet our new families for September so that we can keep developing the display and updating it each year.

We also hosted our partner school colleagues, and it was lovely to be able to show them around and speak about some of the things we had implemented and others that we are still developing. We invited our Year 2 Dom Squad (pupil chaplaincy team) to come and speak to our hub visitors, and the children were able to confidently answer the questions they were asked. For us, that shows that the actions that we have taken are beginning to trickle down to the children and that they are noticing the changes that we are making.

We are looking forward to continuing on this journey and embedding our changes into school life and our curriculum.

*Michelle Anderton and Stephanie Gavin*

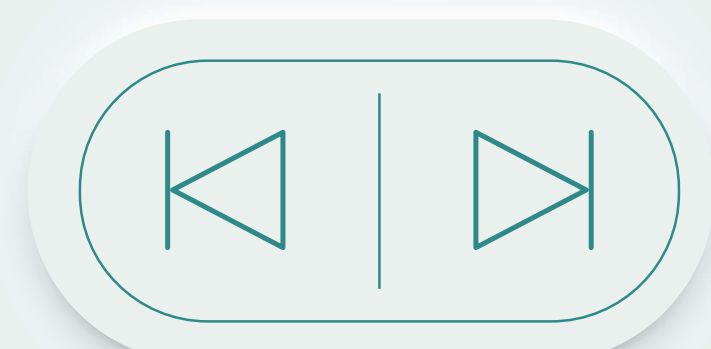
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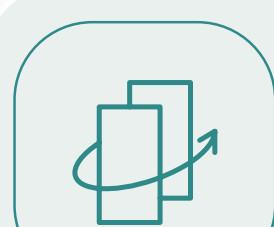


# ST THOMAS MORE SCHOOL

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## September 2023

St Thomas More School is a one-form-entry school situated in Letchworth Garden City, North Hertfordshire. As a faith school, our catchment area tends to be wider than many community schools. We draw in families from all over Letchworth – a highly diverse socio-economic area – as well as from Baldock, Hitchin and surrounding villages.

The school consistently has between 30% and 35% of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), with a wide variation in English proficiency. Currently, the EAL rate is 30%, of which Polish, Igbo and Spanish are the dominant languages.

Stakeholder relationships are strong and based on mutual respect and understanding. The school was recognised as a Rights Respecting School by Unicef in 2016, and we use this philosophy – as well as our faith commitment to the common good – as a basis for all our policies, procedures and interactions. We recognise the uniqueness of each individual and aim to work in partnership with our parents in the best interests of each child. Incidents of racism are rare.

Our curriculum underwent a significant review in 2021–22, but we are continuously updating our offer in light of new resources and in response to pupil voice activity. We have identified and included key figures from a range of backgrounds in history, art, science, religion and politics to heighten pupil awareness; for example, the whole school recently participated in a unit of work based on Dame Floella Benjamin's book *Coming to England*. This work was celebrated during a sharing assembly. We have also made a significant investment in our library stock to ensure diversity is not only represented but also celebrated. Pupil feedback has been positive.

Within our PSHE scheme, each class covers a unit that celebrates diversity, and we have a spotlight on British values so that tolerance and mutual respect are interwoven across our curriculum.

We are ambitious for all pupils and would like to believe that we are supportive to all families, but we are keen to investigate this idea to ensure that we really are doing all we can to support our families.

## October 2023

We appreciated the terms of engagement that Professor Paul Miller shared at the beginning of his presentation in the first Great Representation seminar. We have used them as a basis for our own staff discussions, for example by being explicit in welcoming and respecting the diversity of voices and experiences, and by honouring confidentiality.

Paul's observations regarding overseas teachers from majority White nations having much easier access to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the UK than those from majority Black nations were astounding and deeply disturbing. He also highlighted the differing perspectives towards the levels of racism in this country and identified some of the ways that racism may be masked (e.g. harsher disciplinary sanctions for Black and Asian teachers). These are issues that we want to give further thought to.

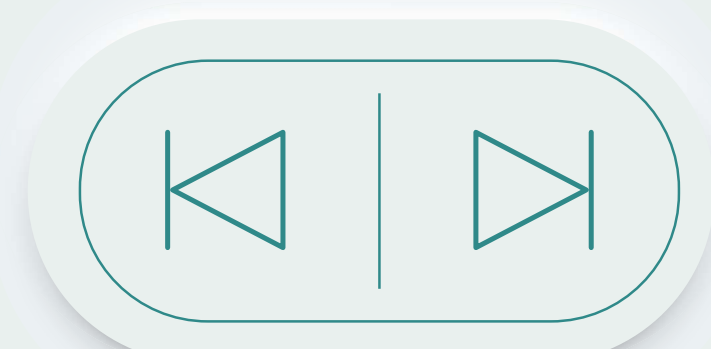
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Cynthia Rowe's presentation was eye-opening. Her passion for equality in education was strikingly evident, but some of her experiences as a headteacher of colour and those of her colleagues were quite shocking. The emotional impact of the name-calling and her lived experiences was evident in her delivery; racism has clearly left a residual imprint. Most shocking was her recent experiences of racism in her own school. The need for careful choice of language, and the need to be brave in confronting issues of racism were the key messages we took away from her presentation.

We have talked with staff about some of the issues raised during the first seminar, using the terms of reference mentioned above. There still remains that fear of saying the wrong thing or using incorrect or imprecise language, but we hope and anticipate that this may settle down as staff become more comfortable with these discussions.

### November 2023

Our first hub group school visit was to Wormley Primary School. Seeing how another school was addressing issues of diversity and equality was useful. For us, the way in which the school had adapted its provision to meet the specific needs of its diverse population was particularly impressive. Dedicated spaces for specific groups, as well as carefully selected resources to support wider experiences and understanding, were evidently being used with great impact.

We were already aware that the issue of identity is a complex one – each of us has our own narrative, our own experiences and beliefs, our own view of the world. Yet the speakers during the second Great Representation seminar brought this issue to life in so many unexpected – and indeed shocking – ways. Claire Stewart-Hall shared her research findings and linked these to her own experiences, which gave a fascinating insight into her life. She then encouraged us to reflect on our own characteristics and how they fit into what society has considered to be the *norms*. This proved to be really useful in helping us to understand why we think the way that we do and in opening us up to the appreciation that others have experienced the world in completely different ways and of the effect this has on our identities.

Sufian Sadiq's presentation was memorable in a different way. There was a sense of optimism at the beginning when he talked of his own life, his family, his career and the upward mobility that the family had experienced. Sufian's passion for education shone through, as did his commitment to making the world a better place through all the voluntary work he is involved in. However, as he described in detail some of the recent experiences he and his family have faced, the room fell silent. We recognised the enormity of the pain and hurt that he has had to endure in this country in this past year. No one could fail to be deeply disturbed by his experiences and the personal toll they has taken on him. We dearly hope that he can draw strength from all the goodwill in the room.

Shammi Rahman also gave testament to the struggles she has experienced. She was able to identify those influential people who have spurred her on to work towards a better future. The day left us with lots to reflect on and a clear moral imperative to get it right for all the children and families in our community.

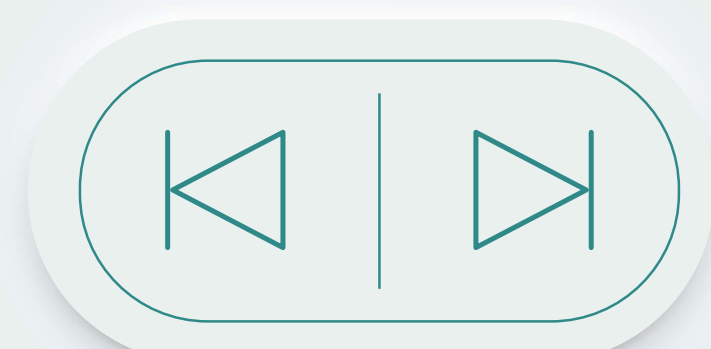
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Our next school visit was to Roundwood Park Secondary School. It was really useful to gain an appreciation of the challenges that a large secondary school faces, especially the particular circumstances of a school in an affluent area of Hertfordshire that is relatively close in proximity to Luton, which has a very different demographic.

What particularly struck us was the openness and candour of staff and students. It was clear that staff had reflected deeply on the content of their curriculum and had made considered choices in recognising that the world is changing and to value their students. Staff were impressive when sharing their deep thinking on trickier topics, which it would be easy to shy away from. Staff were keen to ensure that lessons were delivered in a safe space, whereby complex issues could be properly explored – a real testament to the calibre of the school.

Students also spoke candidly of their experiences – some had been at the school since Year 7 and were able to testify how the school’s culture had evolved in that time. Others had joined in the sixth form, and they articulated their induction into the school and their sense of belonging. Relationships were open and supportive, tackling issues head-on in a collaborative and supportive manner. After our experience at Seminar 2, it was a joy to witness how the younger generation were able to openly discuss issues of identity and representation. This made us think about our own setting and how we can further celebrate individual identity.

### December 2023

A concern that we had raised in school and started to explore prior to the third session was the topic of tokenistic representation throughout the curriculum. Through visiting our hub schools, a question we continue to ponder is: *How do we ensure all are represented in our curriculum without making it appear tokenistic?* Bennie Kara offered some insightful suggestions to overcoming this and spoke about embedding a culture of representation in the curriculum as being *usual* but not *normal*, as normal suggests that the alternative is *abnormal*. She suggested that events such as Black History Month can present the key stimuli to begin conversations and provide a useful context to promote discussions with members of staff, who may feel unsure of how to approach certain topics.

A further provocation from Bennie Kara’s session was around the information that children confirm as so-called facts on a daily basis. This observation made us consider the impact of the media, social media and families on the way that young people’s views are shaped. It confirmed the importance of ensuring that the curriculum being delivered in our setting provides a safe environment for points of view and the reliability of sources to be challenged.

Seb Gray, former headteacher of Laurance Haines School, picked up on this challenge when discussing his journey of developing a community that felt heard. He discussed the purpose and outcomes of setting up a forum for all members of the community to share their views of world events. This provided an insight into what the same events mean to different families. He shared his journey of *Unaware – aware – active – advocate*.

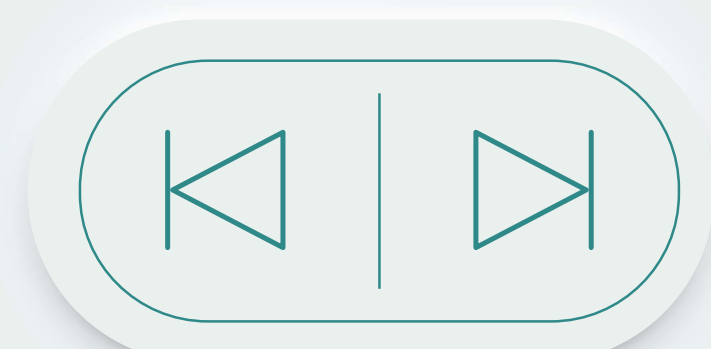
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To conclude the day, Melissa Lowry, EDI Lead at Knebworth Primary School, gave an emotive account of the in-house racism within her own community. Whilst acknowledging that some actions (e.g. the touching of her hair) came from ignorance rather than be designed to cause hurt, they nevertheless resulted in her own turmoil and led her to question her sense of belonging.

Her solution is to share knowledge to foster deeper understanding amongst all children in the education system today. She emphasised the importance, for example, of educating all children within each community about the culture of hair care and touching hair through the use of books. This is an issue that we do address in school, with the book *Hair Love* by Matthew A Cherry.

## January 2024

Building on the premise that race is a social construct and therefore an invention based on arbitrary markers (such as colour of hair, eyes, skin, etc), Professor David Gillborn implored us at our next seminar to see that racism is a very real issue and that the strategy of simply avoiding it isn't a good enough response. David referred to this as *race evasion* and argued that this is simply a strategy to actively refuse to address issues of racism.

Toks Olusamokun, HFL Education race equity adviser, highlighted the impact of this strategy with reference to *Maybe I Don't Belong Here* by David Harewood – a testament to the struggles of identity and belonging of a Black British child. Toks left us in no doubt that this was not an isolated case, as she highlighted case studies of other children who faced similar struggles. The insidious nature of comments and actions that build over time undoubtedly has a lasting effect on those who have encountered them.

This is an issue that we have thought long and hard about – that frustration that can build into anger or lack of self-worth and how it can be avoided. Toks strongly advocated a culture of belonging – something that we feel strongly about in our school. We constantly strive to sustain and develop a culture of respect and openness, but are all staff aware of the impact of those microaggressions, and do all staff feel empowered to tackle them? Staff discussion – to develop understanding and ensure that all are confident and competent to effectively address racism issues – has now been built into our training schedule. Likewise, we are starting a process of scrutinising our policies and procedures to ensure that they address racism.

The presentation from the headteacher of Mount Grace School, Geeta Patel, sharing her lived experience, was fascinating. Contrasting her own positive experiences with those of her husband, we could clearly see the impact of their different life events and how this informed their understanding of the world. Examples of the pressures from social media and marketing were shared, but the main message we took away was the importance of language and understanding how this can be a barrier. As a primary school we place high focus on language development, but Geeta's presentation has made us want to further explore this issue through a racial lens.

Next we visited St John's Infant and Nursery School and Fair Field Junior School, both part of the Poppy Academy Trust.

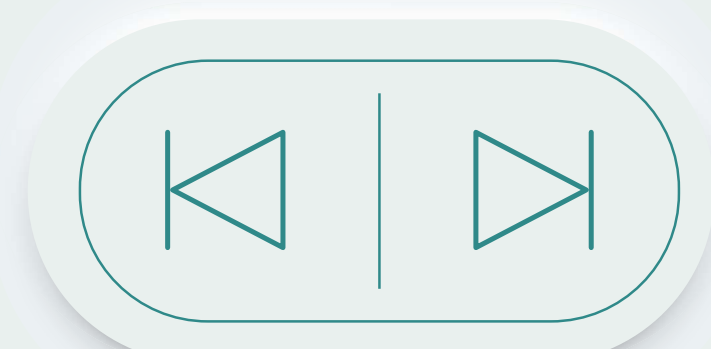
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From these visits, it was really useful to see how *belonging* was mirrored across both schools to ensure children did not lose sight of who they were when transitioning from the infant to the junior school. Every member of the community was thinking about why and how they belonged. The children's comments were insightful and enabled the classes to open up about some topics that may be considered challenging to approach.

The freedom the children were given to lead assemblies and set up charities linked to an area important to them was notable at both schools. This allowed them to feel able to discuss any struggles they have faced or are fearful to face.

One child-led topic that stood out was the neurodiversity topic. Year 6 pupils had led an assembly on what it means to be neurodiverse. This challenged us to consider how we can gather pupil voice to empower our Junior Leadership Team to lead more assemblies on topics around belonging.

## February 2024

In the context of current world conflicts and the impact they are having on people's sense of belonging, Ruth-Anne Lenga encouraged us on Day 5 to consider ways in which we could approach racism in school with primary school children. Ruth-Anne gave us the opportunity to see antisemitic behaviours through the eyes of her community and gave us a greater sense of what it is currently like to be Jewish in the UK. Sharing data relating to recent local antisemitic attacks, Ruth-Anne emphasised the fact that this could be and is happening in our locality. This talk made us consider historical stereotypes of the Jewish faith and signs to look out for, including the number 18 representing Adolf Hitler.

Penny Rabiger built on these ideas as she recounted her personal experiences of helping to create anti-racist schools. Her testimony further supported our understanding of racism within the hidden curriculum. She stressed the importance of analysing racism within our contexts and the need to be considering "everything, everywhere, all the time". Her talk allowed us to think about accessibility within our school and whether our provision is inclusive to all of our community and not just some, working on the premise that no family is unreachable but schools can be.

A presentation from Margaret Wix School provided us with an opportunity to hear the impact of this project first-hand from local primary school children. The staff shared the context of their school and how this had impacted on their delivery of cultural capital. When planning, they asked the questions: Whose culture are we capitalising? Is it the culture of our children and their families? The children emphasised the importance of ensuring that the chosen curriculum is helping to educate and form opinions about the world around us and that it is presented from more than one point of view.

## March 2024

In summary, the Great Representation programme has provided us with the knowledge and skills to reflect on our own practice and challenge our previous thinking. Moving forward, we shall continue to ensure that our curriculum evolves to reflect both our local community and changes in the wider society.

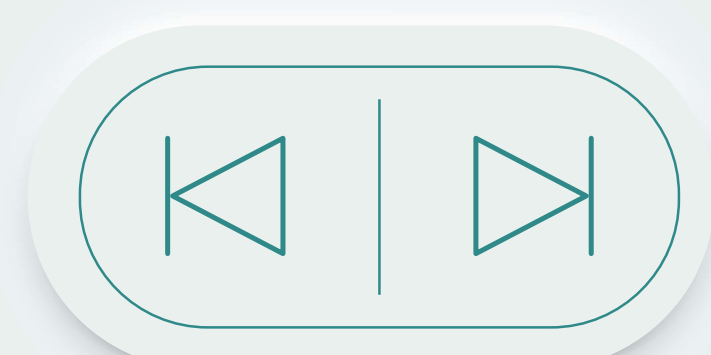
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Our governors have taken a proactive interest in being on this journey with us, so equality and diversity will feature highly in all forward planning for the school. Leaders are keen to keep abreast of up-to-date research to ensure that all aspects of school life prepare pupils well for being compassionate, articulate, informed and empowered citizens of the world.

*Jane Perry and Hayley Barnes*

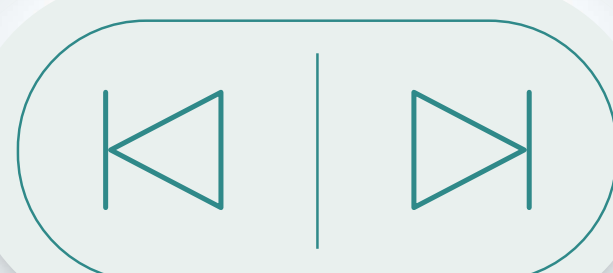
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# THE POPPY ACADEMY TRUST

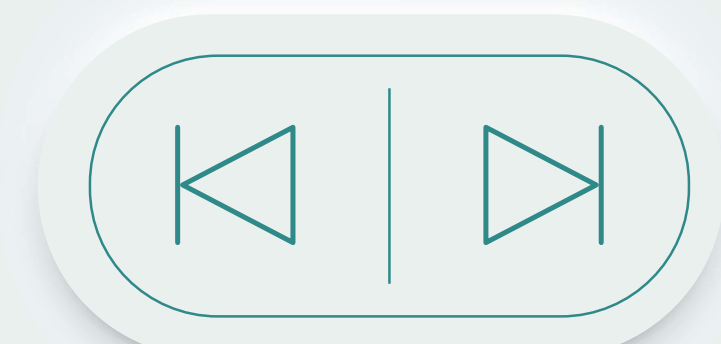
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## September 2023

Fair Field Junior School is a small academy school and part of the Poppy Trust. It is based in Radlett, where the majority of our children are White, although the student body has become more ethnically diverse over the last few years. We have always prided ourselves on our inclusive practice. We believe that every child has the right to feel safe and deserves nurturing to help them achieve their full potential, regardless of their starting point.

We know we have the power to support the shaping of the next generation – a power that needs to be used well. Society is diverse and, as our community is predominantly White, we know that we need to be proactive in bringing diversity teaching into our school through our curriculum.

Leaving the first Great Representation seminar was inspiring, overwhelming and thought-provoking. Being met with the question “Are you racist?” was extremely uncomfortable. Professor Paul Miller shared with us the racial struggles and realities in the world, including things we were totally unaware of linked to employment, education and opportunities. We knew this was going to be hard; however, we are excited to learn and make changes.

## October 2023

This month is Black History Month – something we have always acknowledged in school. As it approached, we thought more carefully than we have in the past about what we wanted to achieve. Some of the facts that were shared with us in the first seminar made us want to inspire all our children. With this in mind, we decided to celebrate contemporary Black women. Working with our Inclusion Ambassadors, a variety of Black women were introduced in assemblies throughout the month. Each class also picked three women to learn about in detail and created displays about them.

During the month we also launched an optional task. Presenting the children with a large empty display wall, we challenged them to help us fill it with information about Black women who inspire them. We didn't set rules; it was left open. For the first two weeks we only received contributions from our Black children. Later we received some from our Asian children, and finally from our White children. We hadn't previously noticed this lack of engagement from different groups of children.

The course is making us notice more what is going on around us. We feel we have opened our eyes and are now seeing when our Black children have been most engaged; this has been when they are seeing Black figures. As a result, we are working on improving representation, for example in assemblies, and ensuring that book covers with Black characters are front facing in the library.

This month we had the privilege of going on our first hub visit, to Wormley School. As soon as we walked in we felt welcomed. The sense of belonging was palpable throughout the visit, from a whole-school art tile project positioned in pride of place, where each child had painted themselves, to creating a space for the school's Traveller community. The children were proud of who they were and were encouraged to celebrate their cultures.

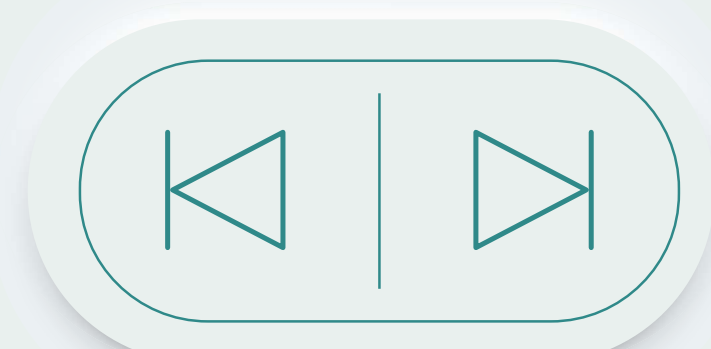
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This month we have also:

- begun book audits to see if we have representation within our stock
- set performance-management targets for the year, including ensuring representation of ethnic groups within our teaching content, class environment and displays

### November 2023

The second meeting of the project was extremely thought-provoking. We had the privilege of listening to Sufian Sadiq's talk "A Walk in My Shoes". He spoke about his family's experience, the conflict in Gaza, and how he felt that racism couldn't be stopped. The emotion he shared was moving and powerful and felt spontaneous. The silence in the room was deafening. This confirmed more than ever the importance of acceptance and what true inclusion and belonging are. We walked away knowing that our children need to feel they belong and that they have a place in our school, regardless of their background or experiences. Professor Paul Miller's mantra of *You see me, you hear me, I belong* echoes in our thoughts.

In the past few months it has been us as leaders who have been thinking, observing, and listening to the lived experiences of others. Now it was time to work with the staff. This month we have started to consider our staff's CPD. We led a staff meeting replicating some of the activities we have completed on the course. One of the concepts that has stuck with us is that we need to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

During our staff meeting we presented the staff with different images of Kenya (mainly city views and one of a village with mud huts). We also posed a number of questions, including, *Are you sure you are not racist?* We challenged the staff to think of 30 racist attitudes. It was here that staff began sharing their own experiences. Sharing video clips looking at White privilege and the doll experiment allowed us to make staff feel uncomfortable and opened up a discussion on life experiences and attitudes. It was a powerful staff meeting and, again, we began to notice behaviours: our White staff members were very quiet throughout the meeting, and as the meeting progressed, we began to hear lived experiences from our Black and Asian staff.

This month we had our second school hub visit to Roundwood Park Secondary School. From our primary school perspective, this was a wonderful opportunity to see the next stage of education in action. We spoke to a group of sixth formers from a range of backgrounds, and we were encouraged to ask questions. The pupils shared that they are listened to and have been supported in setting up a prayer room. Some of the students had joined the school in the sixth form and travelled from Luton. They were open about their experiences and feelings of being in a predominantly White environment. We also spoke to the English teaching team, who told us about the work they had done on the English curriculum. It was clear they had really thought about what they were teaching and why; their brave choices were inspiring.

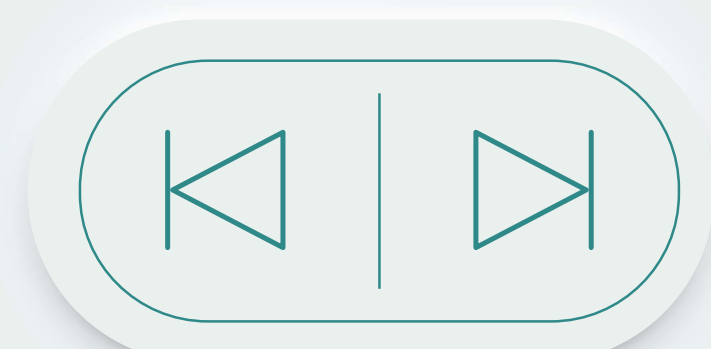
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## December 2023

Listening to Bennie Kara, we began to think about how we can ensure that diversity is not a bolt-on. Bennie explained that many of our children's views come from family, their peer group and the media, with lots of unfiltered information. Being reminded of this, we know that our curriculum is key.

This month we had an interaction with a Year 6 student, who had just completed a unit about World War I. She asked why she wasn't taught about Black soldiers – a question we couldn't answer. This comment highlighted the importance of including *parallel stories* and not teaching a single narrative. In response to this, we immediately looked at the history texts in the school and bought new titles, including *Black Poppies* by Stephen Bourne and *A Place for Me* by Dame Floella Benjamin (stories about the Windrush generation).

## February 2024

Over the past few months our thinking has continued to develop. We have been speaking about what we value most. Each speaker over this project has brought a wealth of experiences, but those that have made the biggest impact on us have been the lived experiences we have heard. Geeta Patel, Mount Grace's headteacher, shared with us a story about her daughter's ballet journey and how her exam grades rose from below 80% to 93% once she received tonal pointe shoes and tights. Geeta told us that belonging is a good place to start. It was her words – combined with Paul Miller's mantra *You see me, you hear me, I belong* – that have echoed through our ears. This is our next priority – we want our children to feel that they belong! The phrase *Representation matters* has also stuck with us. We have found ourselves questioning whether our children are represented at our school and whether they can see themselves.

With this in mind, we planned an immersion week based on belonging. Our headteacher led a whole-school assembly about her lived experience growing up. It was a powerful way in. The next day, one of the children brought in a painting, on the back of which she had written in Armenian script – the language of our headteacher's heritage. A week later, one of our boys came and spoke to the head about an Armenian footballer. Our headteacher had been seen, and both of those responses made her feel that she belonged.

Looking at the makeup of our school community, we researched people who represented our children through race, religion, gender, disability and nationality, and we created a list of more than 30. Each child researched someone they felt represented them; they were free to choose who. A welcome sign was put up at the front of the school showing all the languages spoken in our school.

We decided that we wanted to create large-scale art. Every child and staff member in our school created a visual representation of themselves on a wooden panel that would be displayed in our school. We began by running a staff meeting, where the teachers created their own panels. During this session, one of our teachers paused when it came to choosing the paint to represent her skin colour, saying "I feel really uncomfortable. I don't want to ask for the Brown. How do I make my colour?" As we looked around, we saw that no one had attempted their skin colour. Learning from

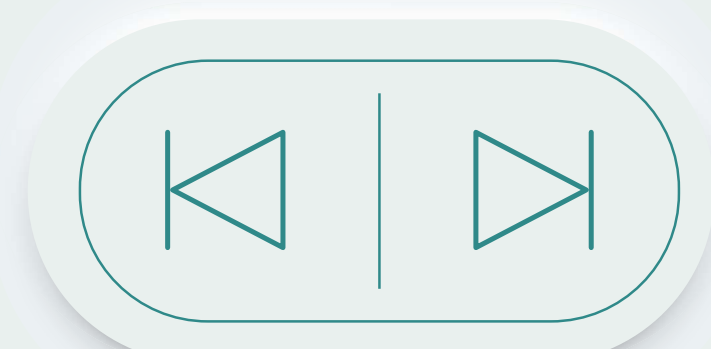
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this, we bought a variety of skin-toned paints ahead of the children completing the project. The results were wonderful, with the children adding details about their heritage to their representation, including written script, flags and native flowers.



*Representations of all our children and staff members*

Inspired by an #ITooAmBirmingham slide shown by Toks Olusamokun at HFL Education, everyone wrote about their sense of belonging. We saw some powerful writing and our children beginning to feel safe to be themselves.



*#ITooAmBirmingham*

## March 2024

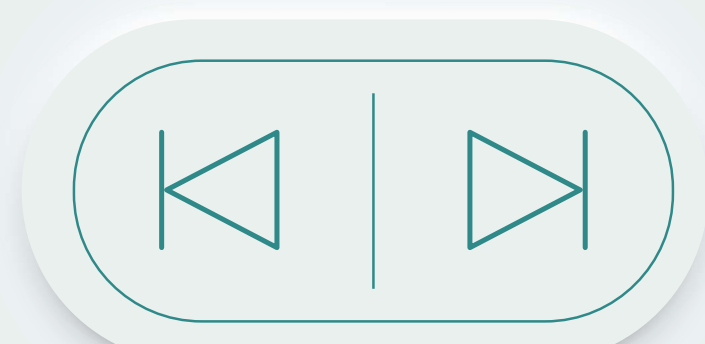
March saw our final hub school visit, to St Thomas More. Here we witnessed the whole school community supporting their town in their annual Arbor Day; the sense of pride was contagious. Talking to some of the children, it was evident that pupil voice was strong in the school and that the children were listened to.

A powerful performance at the Brit Awards by Dave, titled "Black" has left lasting thoughts. He sang the words "Workin' twice as hard as the people you know you're better than, 'Cause you need to do double what they do so you can level them." This took us back to a comment one of our Black parents had made about four years earlier: "You don't understand how hard it is to be Black, especially a Black boy, at this time." Those words have always sat on our shoulders, but we understand them better now.

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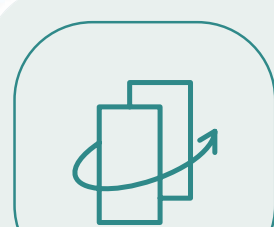
As we come to the end of this project, we know that the work is just beginning and that the road will be long and bumpy. We are ready to be brave and uncomfortable. We understand that the essence of race equity work is in the culture of belonging, baked into our ethos and teaching. We feel that our eyes have been opened to the baggage that some of our children are carrying, and we are deliberately doing things a little differently.

*Davinia Leggett and Alice Aharon*

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# THORN GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

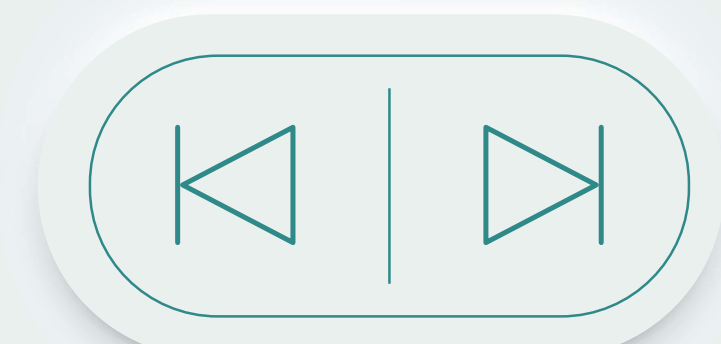
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## September 2023

Thorn Grove is a one-form-entry primary school in Bishop's Stortford. It is close to Stansted airport, and the diversity of the pupil population reflects the fact that there are families from many countries living near and working at the airport. Over the last few years, the Reception cohorts have been much more diverse. We feel it is important for all our families to have a voice and to be represented in the curriculum and in everything we do and celebrate.

We would like our staff to have the confidence to discuss race and ethnicity, and to have an appreciation of unconscious bias. We have taken some steps towards a more inclusive curriculum such as introducing the No Outsiders programme. We feel taking part in the Great Representation programme will equip us with the skills and knowledge to develop an anti-racist culture in our school community.

We have always felt that the staff and children at our school weren't racist, even if there were unkind comments made from time to time. This was children not using the right words or making a mistake. We addressed the occasional comment with the children and their parents, but we didn't truly look deeper. We felt that we were doing enough, but we now recognise that we weren't.

When we reflect and look back, how many comments have we downplayed or not given the attention that there should have been? We've drawn a line – from now on, we know we have to be more proactive rather than reactive. We must plan and make the plan clear to all of the school community. We know we want a richer curriculum, a community with an equal voice, and an environment where challenge is accepted.

Now all incidents relating to racism are addressed by senior leaders. We provide time to educate the child making the comments and ensure we meet with all parents concerned. We also now do a check with the victim after two weeks of any incident to check whether they feel things have been dealt with appropriately and to see if anything has changed.

The work on our curriculum has led us to think more deeply and not to shy away from change. We felt our history curriculum wasn't representative of the children who attend Thorn Grove so swapped the study of the Mayan civilisation with the study of Benin. Texts within the classrooms and school library have been updated to include more books on diversity and, following feedback from pupil voice, an increased number of texts with Black protagonists.

However, we felt our anti-racism work was tokenistic and didn't go far enough. With a changing demographic, we needed to change our approach. We've therefore actively sought the views of the children, the parents and the staff. We carried out parent and pupil voice sessions to have open and frank discussions. We wanted to make clear our intentions. We asked the parents and children how they felt represented as part of the Thorn Grove community and what we could do to change and improve this. We sought their views on the curriculum, the topics we teach, and whether they felt this is sufficiently diverse. We also took views regarding Black History Month and whether this was the best way to celebrate Black achievements. This was a somewhat nerve-racking activity, but it felt refreshing too.

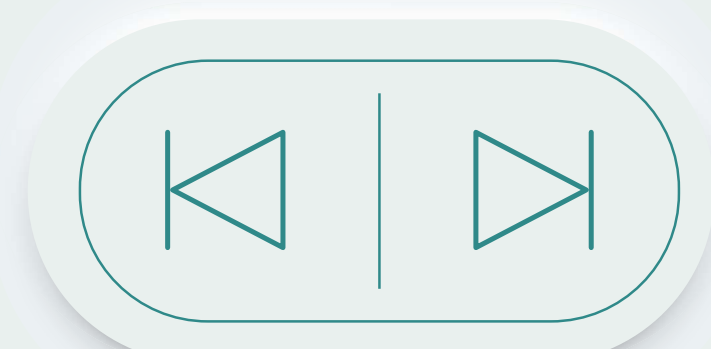
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We now have a working group, with parent involvement. Our school development plan has aims around ensuring that the curriculum is diverse, inclusive and representative of the community at Thorn Grove, and around supporting staff and children to have the confidence to discuss race and ethnicity and to have an appreciation of unconscious bias. This ensures all stakeholders are held to account.

Our aims include:

- to create a fluid and diverse curriculum, designed and created to be representative of our community and the world we live in
- to enable our children to see themselves represented in our school
- to attract a diverse range of staff
- to ensure everyone has an appreciation of race and cultural diversity

### October 2023

Attending the first part of the project was great because it allowed us to meet others on the same journey, albeit coming from different starting points. When Professor Paul Miller spoke about curriculum being the social vaccine, it resonated. We have a tool to bring change and to make a difference that will last.

The lived experience of Cynthia Rowe as a serving headteacher was so powerful that we will be approaching her to lead a staff INSET in this area. Her talk also made us realise that racism must be a focus on its own rather than simply included in the blanket term diversity.

We know we have work to do, but we've begun conversations. Our working group has defined a vision: *Our school is reflective of the community we serve, both now and in the future.* We have committed to organising whole-school celebrations on heritage and actively seeking the support of parents from minority ethnic backgrounds. Also, staff appraisals now include a race equity target; we set this in place following Day 1 of the Great Representation programme. The target explicitly tasks leaders at all levels to look through an anti-racist lens at the resources they use within the classroom and to look at the curriculum for the subjects they lead. The next step is to consider how to support our families to discuss race at home.

Each year we have an anti-bullying pledge signed by all children, staff and governors. We have revised this to a Thorn Grove Pledge, which includes being anti-racist.

Our working party decided not to celebrate Black History Month this year but instead to celebrate Black history over the whole school year. This was a conscious decision to move away from it being a tokenistic approach. While token days can lack impact and substance, we felt Stand Up to Racism Day was important as it shows an awareness that racism is not tolerated. Rather than the day being adult-led, we should now consider how we use our house captains to take a lead.

All our assemblies now include reference to Black people and other ethnic minority groups. We also have musicians of the month, with representation from ethnic minorities.

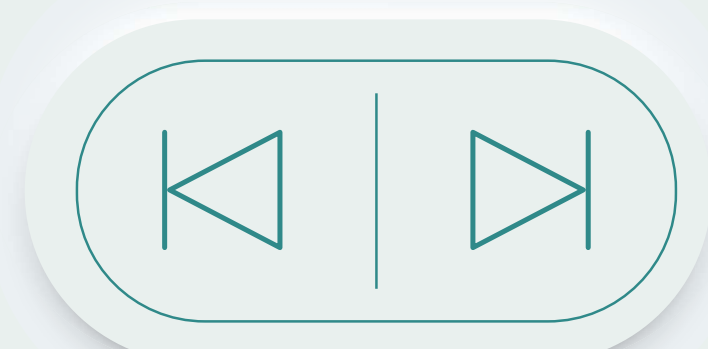
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When we visited Ridgeway School, we could see that they truly value pupil voice. The children are listened to, and things they share with adults are acted on. The children were happy to talk to us about their lived experiences. When we spoke to a pupil group, a Year 9 child shared that she had been treated differently because of race. Another child spoke about how she felt as the only Black child in an English lesson studying the book *Of Mice and Men*. Because she has a voice and the school had asked her how she felt, they have been able to make curriculum revisions to avoid similar uncomfortable situations for other pupils. This shows the importance of listening to your student body.

Staff at Ridgeway have demonstrated their commitment to being an anti-racist school. This is evident, for example with racist incidents being dealt with by the headteacher, showing the importance of stamping out racism. It is also evident in Ridgeway's approach to curriculum change, for example in changing the narratives on the key concept in the history curriculum such as empire. A further example is the Black history assembly, where staff challenged perceptions of Africa with images of capital cities, the music produced and the sporting achievements of the continent's peoples. The assembly was thought-provoking and elicited a much deeper discussion. Ridgeway staff are clearly committed to challenging the ways that people from ethnic minority groups are portrayed and represented in the media.

The visit has led us to think further about our history curriculum and the concept of empire.

### November 2023

It was interesting listening at the next Great Representation seminar to Claire Stewart-Hall's view as a parent and her hopes for her child. Her talk highlighted the importance of children from minority ethnic groups not becoming the *focus or the most knowledgeable* person on an issue being studied. It should be their choice whether or not to talk about their lived experiences.

Sufian Sadiq's speech illustrated very clearly how much needs to be done to stamp out racism. His lived experiences were very raw, they highlighted prejudice and ignorance, and they reflected the darker parts of society. He demonstrated that, despite his standing in education and his community, people can be cruel. It was incredibly emotive and very brave of him to share. His speech made us understand the importance of the journey we are currently on and the vital role that school leaders can play in shaping change.

Sufian's sharing of his young daughter's experiences made us think about the children in our school. We have asked our governing board to ask the children when they visit "What is it like for a child at Thorn Grove?" to explore not only the academic experience but also the degree to which they feel a sense of belonging. As part of all governor visits, there is always an opportunity for pupil voice with children of a variety of backgrounds. Governors have some targeted questions to really understand how the children feel about their school, what makes them feel part of the Thorn Grove community, and how things could be improved. The findings are shared at full governing board meetings.

We feed back to staff following our seminars, and one thing we have now all agreed on is the need to be conscious of images used in day-to-day teaching.

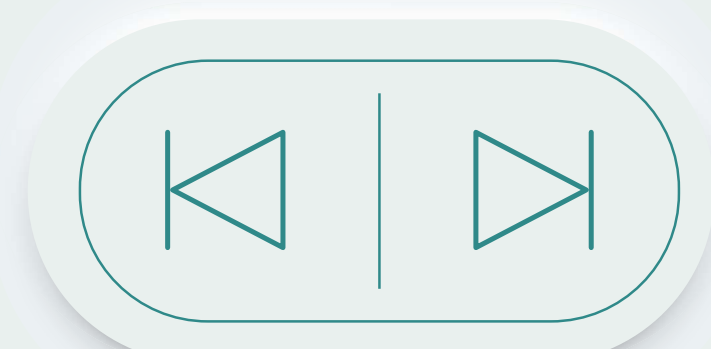
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We now have a working group, with parent involvement. Our school development plan has aims around ensuring that the curriculum is diverse, inclusive and representative of the community at Thorn Grove, and around supporting staff and children to have the confidence to discuss race and ethnicity and to have an appreciation of unconscious bias. This ensures all stakeholders are held to account.

Our aims include:

- to create a fluid and diverse curriculum, designed and created to be representative of our community and the world we live in
- to enable our children to see themselves represented in our school
- to attract a diverse range of staff
- to ensure everyone has an appreciation of race and cultural diversity

### October 2023

Attending the first part of the project was great because it allowed us to meet others on the same journey, albeit coming from different starting points. When Professor Paul Miller spoke about curriculum being the social vaccine, it resonated. We have a tool to bring change and to make a difference that will last.

The lived experience of Cynthia Rowe as a serving headteacher was so powerful that we will be approaching her to lead a staff INSET in this area. Her talk also made us realise that racism must be a focus on its own rather than simply included in the blanket term diversity.

We know we have work to do, but we've begun conversations. Our working group has defined a vision: Our school is reflective of the community we serve, both now and in the future. We have committed to organising whole-school celebrations on heritage and actively seeking the support of parents from minority ethnic backgrounds. Also, staff appraisals now include a race equity target; we set this in place following Day 1 of the Great Representation programme. The target explicitly tasks leaders at all levels to look through an anti-racist lens at the resources they use within the classroom and to look at the curriculum for the subjects they lead. The next step is to consider how to support our families to discuss race at home.

Each year we have an anti-bullying pledge signed by all children, staff and governors. We have revised this to a Thorn Grove Pledge, which includes being anti-racist.

Our working party decided not to celebrate Black History Month this year but instead to celebrate Black history over the whole school year. This was a conscious decision to move away from it being a tokenistic approach. While token days can lack impact and substance, we felt Stand Up to Racism Day was important as it shows an awareness that racism is not tolerated. Rather than the day being adult-led, we should now consider how we use our house captains to take a lead.

All our assemblies now include reference to Black people and other ethnic minority groups. We also have musicians of the month, with representation from ethnic minorities.

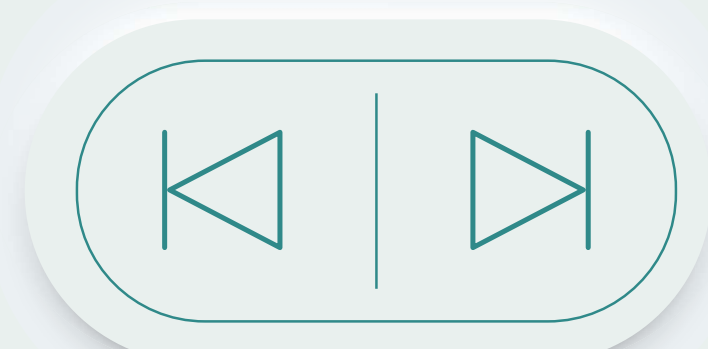
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When we visited Ridgeway School, we could see that they truly value pupil voice. The children are listened to, and things they share with adults are acted on. The children were happy to talk to us about their lived experiences. When we spoke to a pupil group, a Year 9 child shared that she had been treated differently because of race. Another child spoke about how she felt as the only Black child in an English lesson studying the book *Of Mice and Men*. Because she has a voice and the school had asked her how she felt, they have been able to make curriculum revisions to avoid similar uncomfortable situations for other pupils. This shows the importance of listening to your student body.

Staff at Ridgeway have demonstrated their commitment to being an anti-racist school. This is evident, for example with racist incidents being dealt with by the headteacher, showing the importance of stamping out racism. It is also evident in Ridgeway's approach to curriculum change, for example in changing the narratives on the key concept in the history curriculum such as empire. A further example is the Black history assembly, where staff challenged perceptions of Africa with images of capital cities, the music produced and the sporting achievements of the continent's peoples. The assembly was thought-provoking and elicited a much deeper discussion. Ridgeway staff are clearly committed to challenging the ways that people from ethnic minority groups are portrayed and represented in the media.

The visit has led us to think further about our history curriculum and the concept of empire.

### November 2023

It was interesting listening at the next Great Representation seminar to Claire Stewart-Hall's view as a parent and her hopes for her child. Her talk highlighted the importance of children from minority ethnic groups not becoming the focus or the most knowledgeable person on an issue being studied. It should be their choice whether or not to talk about their lived experiences.

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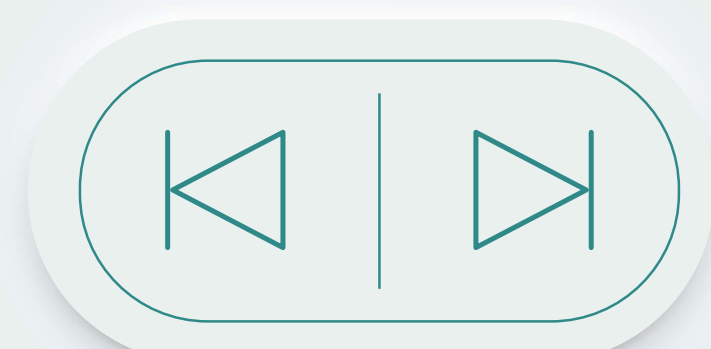
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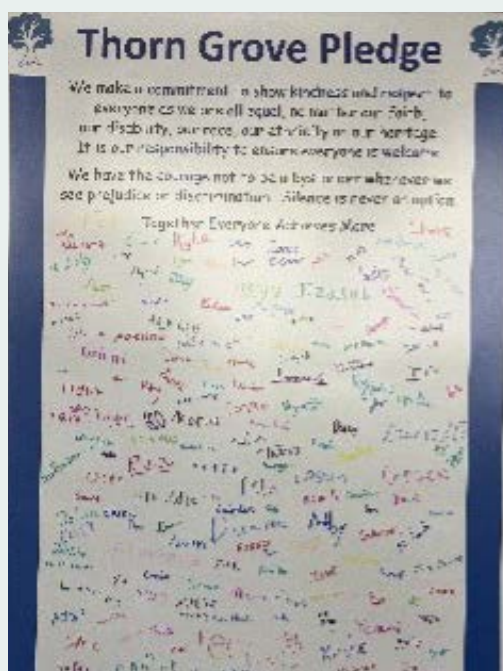
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We feed back to staff following our seminars, and one thing we have now all agreed on is the need to be conscious of images used in day-to-day teaching.

Being on this course has made us reflect on our practice and has influenced us to change our anti-bullying pledge to a Thorn Grove Pledge. The anti-bullying pledge was introduced four years ago and was a document our school community signed annually, to commit to the belief that bullying is not acceptable. We now feel that a commitment to be inclusive and challenge prejudice or discrimination should also be openly acknowledged. The new Thorn Grove Pledge states:



We make a commitment to show kindness and respect to everyone as we are all equal, no matter our faith, our disability, our race, our ethnicity or our heritage. It is our responsibility to ensure everyone is welcome. We have the courage not to be a bystander whenever we see prejudice or discrimination. Silence is never an option. Together Everyone Achieves More

*The Thorn Gove Pledge*

Senior leaders at school discuss this pledge with every class in Key Stages 1 and 2. More detailed discussions take place with upper Key Stage 2 learners, where it is linked to the wider community and racist events reported in the media.

Following Shammi Rahman sharing her experiences, we read her blog post on the HFL Education website, “The untold stories of our grandparents”. This led us to consider how we mark Remembrance Day.

As part of Remembrance, we included poppies of all colours, and specifically the black poppy.



*Staff and pupils on Remembrance Day 2023*

The Black Poppy Rose commemorates the contributions of Black, African and Caribbean communities to the war effort – as servicemen and servicewomen, and as civilians. The charitable organisation was launched in 2010 and aims to highlight “largely untold historical legacies” from the 16th century onwards. The wreath the children laid at the Remembrance service in Bishop’s Stortford contained black poppies.

The visit from leaders from our hub group to Thorn Grove gave us the opportunity to share what we have achieved to date and to reflect on the measures we have put in place. For the first time, we brought together a group of pupils from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds to openly discuss and share their opinion around racism at Thorn Grove with an external audience. One child was comfortable to share his belief that when racism happens, not enough is done. He shared a recent example of this, and this has led us to ensure there is transparency and openness about consequences and steps taken for both victim and perpetrator.

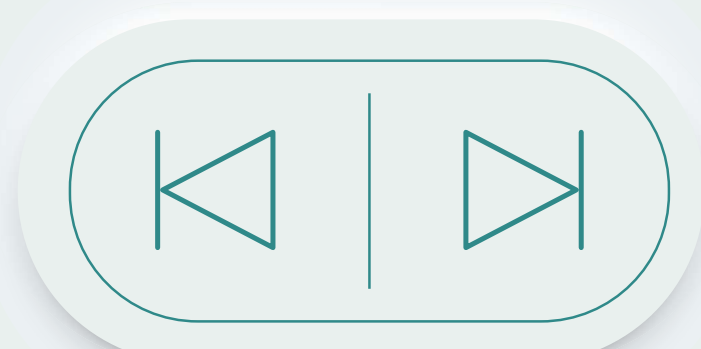
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## December 2023

Our involvement on the programme has really made us think differently as leaders. For example, when class teachers asked about having an elf for their classroom in the lead-up to Christmas, we chose elves with different skin colours to represent a wider range of our children within the school. We have added several religious celebrations and special days into our school calendar to increase opportunities for the children to learn more about each other's culture and heritage.

The speakers at Day 3 were all excellent. The best part was the opportunity to hear from leaders within Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes about their lived experiences and the changes they have made. Both Seb Gray and Laurie O'Brien talked about the journey they have been on to make their schools better places for all their children. They shared their thoughts and fears, the barriers they faced (known and unknown) and, probably most importantly, what they learnt from the actions they had taken. They demonstrated the importance of being brave and why we are embarking on this journey. It was important to recognise that sometimes our intentions, albeit for the right reasons, need to be thought through to ensure that the views of different ethnic groups are considered.

We need our community to be listened to, even if opinions may be hard to hear. Both Seb and Laurie highlighted the importance of cooperation and collaboration in all we do. We need to turn uncomfortable spaces into safe ones. And this takes time!

Melissa Lowry, EDI lead at Knebworth School, presented her truth. Her session was thought-provoking and inspiring. We, as leaders, need to challenge the microaggressions of children, staff and parents, by having conversations when someone says or does something that is not OK. We need to challenge our own unconscious bias and understand how to speak to others who may be entrenched in their views. We need to include all voices that disrupt inequalities and tackle racism wherever it is present.

Bennie Kara provided tools for adapting the curriculum. She stressed the importance of diversity in the curriculum, as well as decolonisation. She shared the *Why* and the fundamental need for children to belong. The theme of belonging has threaded through all our keynotes. If we get this right, then we have the basis to use the curriculum as the lever for change – a curriculum that celebrates, a curriculum that has a sense of self-worth for all in the school community, and one that challenges the victim narrative.

We know we are at the beginning of evaluating our curriculum, and we need to do so through different lenses to ensure it is right for all. We need to be curriculum thinkers and consider the importance of established facts and how we share agency for different groups. We need to consider global connections and to look at things through multiple perspectives. The question *What is usual in our curriculum?* is a good starting point.

At Thorn Grove we are mapping out for each subject where we see White people, Black people and underrepresented groups, as well as where we see men and women. We are including our leaders at all levels so that we can challenge any unconscious bias that may exist and so that the views and opinions of everyone are included.

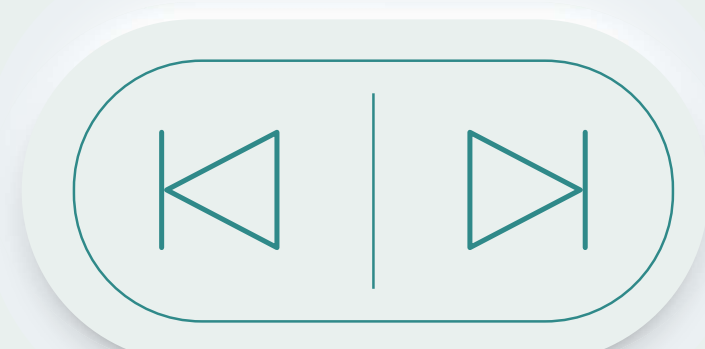
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We are also looking at what subject-specific CPD is available for diversity to make sure that, when we are evaluating our curriculum, we get it right.

## January 2024

The most recent seminar highlighted there is lots of work to do! Professor David Gillborn shared the reality of the impact of racism on a wider scale. He gave the stark facts of racialised outcomes where the system accepts it. His thoughts on the use of statistics around Whites as victims were to the point and stressed the importance of doing what we are doing for the children and families within our school community. His descriptions of colour-blindness and anti-anti-racism made us really think deeply.

One thing that rang true was the idea that we need a critical mass to make change. We need to work together with like-minded people to share ideas and experiences so that we can fully understand and find solutions for the issues we face. Being part of the Great Representation programme, with so many like-minded individuals, allows us to continue to strive for change and to take a strong anti-racism stance.

David Gillborn also spoke about the importance of counting. We record the number of incidents, times, dates and those involved on CPOMS to track patterns. The numbers of incidents are shared with governors in the headteacher reports. This is something we have always done, but we are now drilling down into the numbers and putting greater emphasis on the impact counting can have on individuals and groups.

Toks Olusamokun helped link the statistics to real-life scenarios. It was useful to have the discussions within our groups and as a wider group, to ask the questions about what we would do and how we would react if each scenario were to happen in our school. Toks stressed the importance of having a curiosity and the need to understand the subtlety of racism in our environment. Racism is more subtle and insidious and, more often than not, it is covert.

We need to make a conscious effort to challenge our own biases as leaders; if we don't, then no one will. This needs to be part of our culture within the school, and we recognise that staff will need training in this area. We need to spotlight types of racism and ensure staff have an awareness of microaggressions. Our policies need to be clear and consistent.

Our working group is organising a cultural heritage project, which will celebrate the diversity of our stakeholders and their wider families. We want to know more about how music, stories, dance and food shape different cultures, and about what is important in those cultures. We hope this event will make all our families feel part of something and experience a connection with others that is currently missing. We will then be able to use this knowledge to weave elements into our curriculum and to celebrate all festivals that are important to our stakeholders, such as Vaisakhi, Eid, Diwali, Lunar New Year and Passover. We cannot just decide which ones we think are important to include – we need to talk to our families to find that out. We need to model the importance of belonging through our actions.

As Brené Brown said: "True belonging never asks us to change who we are. True belonging requires us to be who we are."

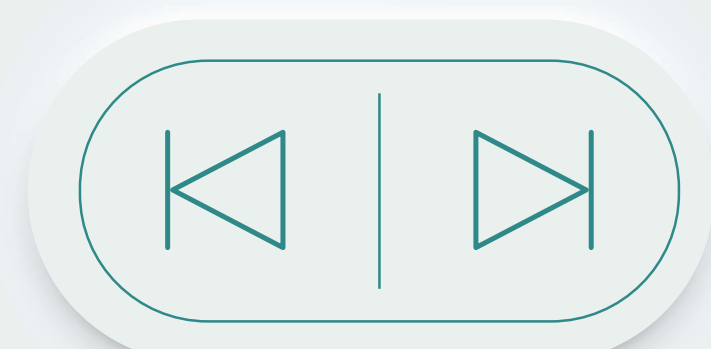
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We will shortly be sending a questionnaire to parents to gather information, as well as speaking directly to our pupils, to gather support for this project.

Geeta Patel, speaking about her “Pixelated Perspectives”, was thought-provoking. Again, she spoke of belonging. She said, “You belong in this world”, and “Belonging is a good place to start”. She spoke of desensitised eyes, and we need to ensure that we are more vigilant now than ever. One direct action for us as a school is having a focus this term on looking at language and its importance. Why does it offend? How does it make you feel? We need to ensure that all our staff model the correct pronunciation of all our children’s names and avoid the shortening of names just because it makes them easier to pronounce. We must always respect what the child or adult wants to be called and how they pronounce their name.

A parent has offered to speak about his experiences of racism during his childhood. This will not be easy for him, but he values the commitment we are making to the Great Representation programme.

As part of Children’s Mental Health Week, the children took part in our Dress to Express event. We had a fantastic variety and representation from sports teams and clubs (e.g. Cubs and Brownies) but, more importantly, cultural representation too. One Year 4 child brought her hijab in to wear. She was unsure if she should wear it because she was concerned about how her peers would feel. When she showed her peers, they encouraged her to wear it. The children in her group are predominantly White British, but they understood and recognised the importance to their friend and class peer.

## February 2024

One thing we’ve learnt on the journey we’ve been on since September is the importance of reflection. We need to recognise how far we’ve come but also to understand that racism does exist in our community (even if we don’t always see it) and that we must continue to speak out and to address it. We recognise that we need greater representation on our governing board. We are looking for the best places to advertise our vacancy to ensure we encourage and appeal to people of all ethnic minorities within the local community.

During the spring term we have given staff and children the opportunity to pray during the day. Although this only affects a small number of pupils and staff, we feel it is important that we show this respect for religious requirements. We have a Black parent coming in to talk to children about their lived experience at school. In addition, we have planned our heritage day survey out. This is amended from previous years, in response to what our families have told us they would like.

Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga’s work on antisemitism was very poignant. The events that are currently happening in the world are having a significant impact here in the UK. She spoke of the importance of safeguarding ethnic minorities in our communities. We need to have definitions to help understand what we are encountering and to be active citizens for agents of change. She stressed the importance of trust. If we can build trust with all groups within our communities, then we will be more successful in the work we are doing.

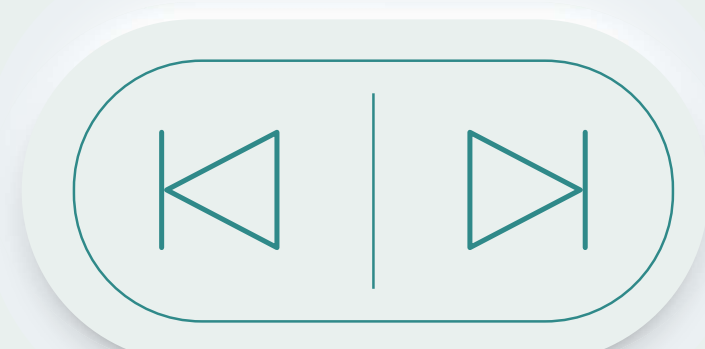
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Penny Rabiger, researcher and education consultant, spoke really clearly about creating an anti-racist school. She expressed the need to have an awareness of the role race plays and the importance of improving the racial literacy of leaders. You need to understand what racism is to become an anti-racist school. Penny said, “If you can’t see it, you can’t be it”.

We know that to be an anti-racist school we need to look for racism so we can unmask and expose it. We need to be able to see it in situ. We have seen an increase in the number of racist incidents recorded, and Penny suggested that this is often the case when you start this journey. What is important is learning the best way to deal with them.

An action for us is to look at policies through an anti-racism lens, and to do this, we need to ask people what they think. We need to involve our diversity working group in helping us with this. Another action for us is to really delve into who belongs and who feels safe in our school environment. Simple things like the use (or not) and choice of eating utensils – for example, hands or chopsticks – could make a difference to some of our children and families.

If we are to truly become an anti-racist school, we need to treat racial literacy like we do safeguarding. We need to ask what someone’s understanding of race is when we recruit, and our staff CPD needs to have a strong thread of anti-racism.

One question Penny posed was, “Does your curriculum whisper ‘You belong’?” We are constantly reviewing our curriculum and, as senior leaders, we will be ensuring that it is accessible to all. We need a curriculum that is truly representative of all ethnic minorities and not just one with a sprinkling of colour. We are currently looking at the role stories can play in this.

We are inviting Rebecca Woode, headteacher of Woodlands Primary School, who also shared her lived experience, to lead some staff development at our school around understanding racism. Rebecca spoke about the importance of talking, despite it not being easy. She highlighted the need to build a platform of understanding and awareness and an understanding of privilege. We feel our staff will benefit from hearing her story and about the microaggressions that still exist in society.

Seeing the journey Margaret Wix Primary School had been on was inspiring. The children were so articulate about the impact of the changes made due to the Great Representation programme. The power of their words showed the importance of the work we are doing in each of our schools. We are at the start of our journey, and we are seeing green shoots of the work we are undertaking, but being able to see what we can achieve is worth holding on to, should we encounter any barriers on our way. At Thorn Grove we now are doing things differently. We see differently, we think differently ... and we are different. The lenses we look through are targeted to ensure that everyone in our community has a voice.

*Peter Luck and Jayne Lilley*

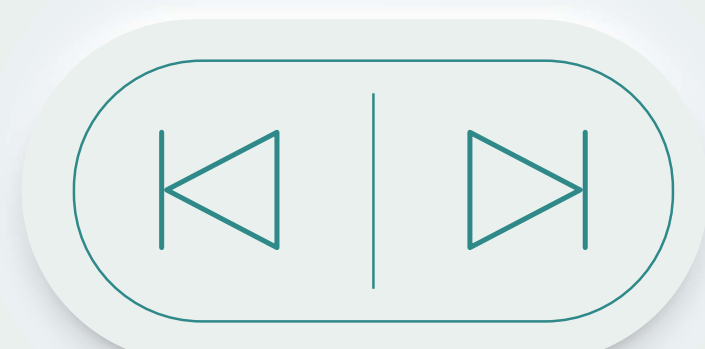
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# WOOD END SCHOOL

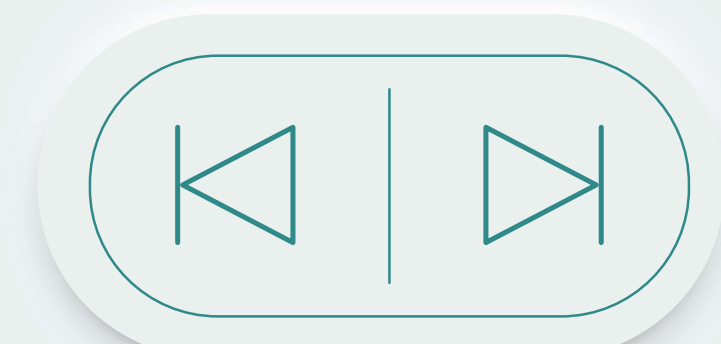
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## September 2023

At Wood End, prior to beginning the Great Representation programme, we had already begun to diversify our curriculum. We had reviewed and invested in our reading curriculum to ensure we had a wide range of texts that celebrated diversity in the broadest sense – cultural diversity, sensory diversity and neurodiversity. Our children access these texts throughout school, starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The books in our libraries also reflected this. We celebrate the work of a range of artists across the school, including Edward-Saidi Tingatinga, Yayoi Kusama and Frida Kahlo. In PE each year group focuses on athletes from diverse backgrounds. Our science curriculum also investigates scientists from different cultural backgrounds.

We felt that we had made a start but there was still a long way to go.

Wood End is a two-form-entry school with 420 pupils on roll in the predominantly affluent White, middle-class area of Harpenden. There are only seven children eligible for pupil premium funding. However, as fewer families have moved into Harpenden, our catchment area has widened, and we now take more pupils from surrounding villages and nearby Luton from more diverse backgrounds.

According to our data, 27% of pupils do not identify as White British. Although the largest group within this 27% are White Other (7%), we have Indian (4%); White and Asian (3%); Pakistani, White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African and Any Other Asian (all 2%); and any other mixed background (4%) represented within our pupil cohort. In total, we have 17 different nationalities. The figures are small compared with many schools nationally and in Hertfordshire; however, they are significant enough for us to ask some key questions:

- Do these children have a sense of belonging at Wood End?
- How can we guarantee that adults within our school community support these children to ensure they have a sense of belonging in our school?

As school leaders we feel passionately about ensuring all of our children feel a sense of belonging and see themselves reflected in our curriculum. We recognise the need to support staff in confronting their unconscious biases and challenging their views and beliefs. We also recognise the importance of adults having a better understanding of what it is like to feel different as a pupil. This will hopefully support us in improving and developing our curriculum to reflect a different perspective to White European.

In 2020 we invited Toks Olusamokun, race equality adviser at HFL Education, to deliver training to all staff and governors. We were aware that some members of staff might possibly hold biased views, either unconsciously or not. Our aim was to open up conversation, get staff thinking and to begin to challenge our views. We wanted staff to think about, and gain some understanding of, what it is like to grow up as a person of colour in Britain and attend a school that is predominantly White. The session was thought-provoking and engaging. Staff were talking and sharing thoughts and opinions.

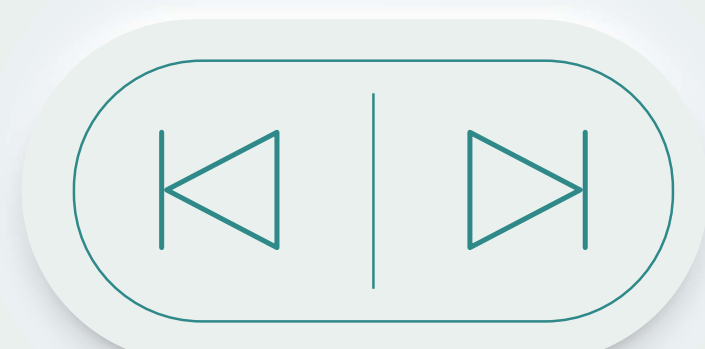
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It was our first step into being brave and confronting the issue head-on.

We next organised unconscious bias training for our governors, and the headteacher and deputy attended the HFL Education National Race Equity Conference. This was a watershed moment. Listening to David Olusoga speak so openly and honestly about his experiences, and then confronting the very White European curriculum that we are teaching in schools, opened our eyes further. Although we had started to diversify our curriculum, we knew that we had to go further, especially in our history curriculum. Being part of the Great Representation programme would support us on our journey and clarify our vision further.

At our first Great Representation seminar, Professor Paul Miller shared some shocking statistics on how racial inequality permeates through our society, illustrating how the colour of our skin affects the outcomes we can expect in all walks of life, not just in education. This was extremely powerful.

We listened to Cynthia Rowe give an open and honest account of her childhood and how racism has impacted her throughout her life and still does. This was so inspiring and thought-provoking – we came away knowing we had to find out what it is like to be a child of colour at Wood End School.

Our new mantra was: *We want everyone at Wood End to feel like they belong.*

On our return to school, we knew that we had a long road ahead of us. We began our mission/work immediately.

We spoke with six children from each year group across Key Stage 2, all from different backgrounds. This was fascinating and reassuring for us. The premise was that they were coming to talk to us about their learning, which is not uncommon practice at Wood End. We were encouraged by what we heard. Older children spoke of the privilege they have, for example living in a richer country, having food and clean water, going to school, having internet access. They talked confidently about differences between people, including skin colour/race, disabilities, people with autism and different religions and faiths.

Pupils were positive about the PSHE curriculum and the work we do to celebrate difference. One child said they had experienced some unkindness about the colour of their skin but added that the school had dealt with it well. Fundamentally, there was a real sense that these children felt they belonged at Wood End. They gave the impression that they do not feel different because of the colour of their skin. We did not feel that they were only saying things they knew we wanted to hear.

So maybe our children do not feel different? We were not prepared to leave it there.

We invited parents from all backgrounds to join us in forming a working party to help and support us on our equity and diversity journey. Parents from a range of diverse backgrounds have volunteered their time, and we feel excited – and a little nervous – about our first meeting, which will be in November. This will help us to delve deeper. We are fully aware that this could be challenging for us as leaders and will lead to change ... but change for the better.

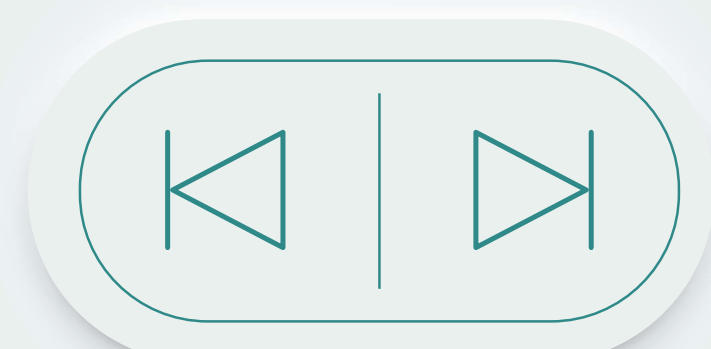
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We had an initial staff meeting, with the aim of sharing what we had learned from our first conference. We also wanted to recommend the books we were reading. It was clear that staff needed to be eased into what we knew could be challenging territory. We want our staff to think about racial inequality in society, in education and in our school, and we want to create a safe place where everyone feels comfortable discussing this.

During the staff meeting we shared many of the stark statistics that Paul Miller spoke of, as well as the information about overseas qualified teachers who have to pass QTS again in the UK to work in Britain's schools. We discussed how underrepresented BME teachers are in the profession compared with the number of pupils of colour and the poorer SATs and GCSE outcomes of pupils from certain racially minoritised groups. We discussed how the colour of our skin influences the outcomes we can expect in all areas of our life: education, health, life expectancy and career opportunities. As part of group discussions, we talked about:

- racism across society and what it means to people
- race as a social construct
- how, as educators, it is our responsibility to influence and change the culture within our school community

At the end of October we had the privilege of visiting Parmiter's School – what an amazing experience! To begin the morning, we toured the school alongside the headteacher, visiting lessons and witnessing how diverse and inclusive this school is. Then we met with subject leaders so they could share the progress of their race equity work across their curriculum. It was inspiring to hear that, as part of their history curriculum, students choose what they study after completing assessments. Recently, they had voted to learn about the Silk Road, the slave trade, and the life and work of Harriet Tubman.

Alongside this, the students have extended homework projects, where they spend time researching something of their choice and then writing a paragraph about it based on an inquiry question. What a brilliant idea and something for us to think about. It was also evident that the school works hard to ensure that diversity runs through their curriculum like a golden thread, particularly the way all groups in society have been treated throughout the ages. They have succeeded in eradicating tokenism such as celebrating Black History Month.

We also spoke to members of the staff working party on equity and diversity, who were able to share their journey so far. It sounded like a safe environment where members of staff could share their experiences and their insecurities about having difficult conversations – something our staff need.

The most powerful evidence came from the students themselves. These were student leaders, many of whom were members of the student Equalities Committee. They recognise that a great deal has been achieved around equality but feel there are improvements still to be made regarding transparency and communication.

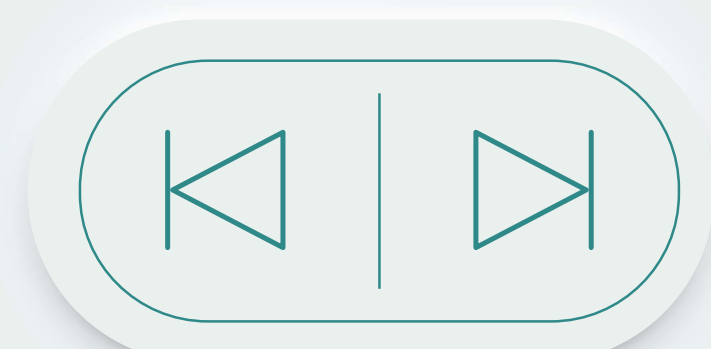
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Five students spoke candidly about their personal experiences of racism throughout their school journey, from teachers making no effort to pronounce their names correctly at primary school, to racist attitudes from their peers even today. These comments were extremely powerful – how can students still be experiencing this?

We felt more determined than ever to continue on our own anti-racist journey.

November/December 2023

At the end of October we had decided that our priorities for the next month were as follows:

- [meet with support staff](#)
- [update our teaching staff](#)
- [meet with our parent group](#)
- [evaluate our priorities](#)

The following week we met with our support staff, sharing the same information that we had with teachers during our initial staff meeting in September. Again, it was clear that for some this was new territory, whilst others had already started their journey. Most were happy to engage in an open discussion, and some were able to share opinions based on firsthand experiences.

One member of staff, who identifies as Black British, shared her experience of living in a White, affluent community and how this impacts her family. She recounted how her son had been stopped by police on a number of occasions, being told, “You don’t look like you belong around here.” She had also been stopped four times over the past two years and had often been racially profiled, resulting in her being followed around local shops. It was particularly powerful for other members of staff to hear this. It was evident that those listening to these experiences had no idea of the challenges that friends and colleagues have on a day-to-day basis.

At the beginning of November we updated our teaching staff on our journey so far. We shared details of our visit to Parmiter’s School and how overwhelmed we had felt listening to the lived experiences of the students. We also talked about the pupil voice sessions we had carried out. Now we had to focus on what we would do next; we felt it was vital to keep talking about our vision and the way forward so that staff felt included, motivated and part of the journey.

Our second Great Representation conference was just as engaging as the first. Claire Stewart-Hall was our first keynote speaker. She spoke about “Institutional Racism and How To Combat It”.

Our second was Sufian Sadiq, whose presentation “Racial Equity: A Walk in My Shoes” was utterly compelling in every sense of the word. Sufian addressed the issue of belonging and the barriers he had faced – and continues to face – on his career path. He shared childhood experiences where people had been extremely kind to him, taking him to cricket matches and paying for his accommodation; but then engaging in racist jokes about him in the locker room afterwards.

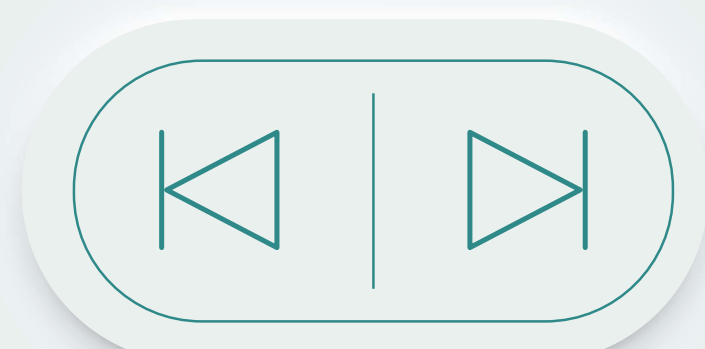
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Every time they asked him if he minded, he told them he didn't – he was grateful for the opportunities they gave him and didn't want to lose that or make them feel awkward. This made us question our own children's experiences. Did they feel like this? Did they choose to stay silent? Because they were in the minority, did they feel they couldn't voice their opinions?

Sufian described feeling the pain of racism in his life on a daily basis and how it affected his family. Hearing how teachers made little effort to pronounce his daughter's name correctly in school echoed what we had heard from students at Parmiter's. This is still happening. Nothing appears to have changed, even over the past ten years.

Back at school, the final meeting we had planned – and the one we were most apprehensive about – was the one with our parents. We had invited all parents to meet with us to support us in our vision of making our school curriculum more diverse. We spent a great deal of time deliberating what our message would be. Would it attract anyone? What if we only attracted White parents? What if we got a mix?

We finally settled on this short communication:

This year, one of our key priorities is to look at our school ethos and curriculum, to ensure they reflect diversity within our school community. We would like to set up a working group of parents to help us on this journey and would appreciate some open and honest dialogue in sharing ideas and helping us move forward. If you would like to be part of our working group, please indicate which afternoon would be best for you, for an initial meeting.

Initially, we received 17 responses, but only five parents were able to join us on the day. Our apprehension had increased as we had received an email from one parent – who declined to join us on the day – expressing concern that by diversifying our curriculum we would be, “rewriting history or significantly changing the curriculum”; “having a pro-Black and anti-White agenda”; “trying to open divides and create differences”; and “indoctrinating” the children. We reassured that parent and those in attendance that this was not our aim.

Of the five parents who attended our meeting, two were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Following the email, we were apprehensive about the intentions of the three White parents who came. At the outset, we reiterated our shared vision of every child having that sense of belonging in our school along with their family. We explained that it was imperative to prepare our children to live in a diverse society, where they are welcoming to and accepting of everyone. We also reiterated that we want all children to have that sense of belonging at Wood End. It was emphasised that we would not be rewriting our curriculum in its entirety – it would be enriched in many ways – and there was no intention to create any division. We talked about what we had achieved to date regarding our reading curriculum, along with information about significant artists and scientists we study from the global majority.

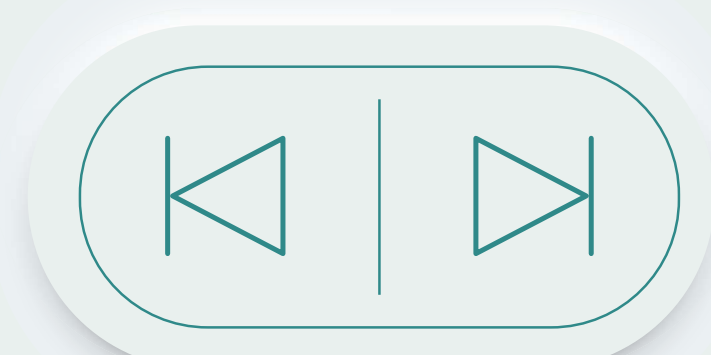
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We explained that a more diverse curriculum would allow all children:

- to be seen in the curriculum
- to interrogate how knowledge in the curriculum has come to be valued
- to hear multiple co-existing narratives in all subjects

All of the parents engaged in our discussion and were supportive of what we were aiming to achieve.

The contributions of the two parents from minoritised backgrounds were extremely compelling. Both reported that they felt they had always been ostracised on the school playground by certain groups of White parents, who completely ignored them. They had assumed this was because they were Brown. To hear this was shocking and disappointing.

One also told us that her children were rarely invited to birthday parties. She had assumed initially this was because they were getting older and fewer people were being invited, but she was now beginning to question this. The other parent was emotional as she told us how some adults in our school had historically pronounced her son's name incorrectly, despite being told how to say it on many occasions. Again, this was disappointing. Another child had also told her son that he could not be successful in life because he was Brown, with that person saying, "Brown people can't be police officers". She was particularly upset because her son's experience was mirroring her own when she was at primary school. She was devastated that – in her eyes – nothing had changed.

In our discussions in September with children from diverse backgrounds, they had reported that their experiences at school were positive. The parent meeting made us question whether this truly was the case. We knew that we needed to speak to them again.

On the whole, we felt positive after the meeting. We knew the parents were supportive of our journey and understood its importance for our school community. However, we couldn't help but feel a little deflated when we reflected on the experiences of our parents from minoritised backgrounds and their children. Their experiences mirrored Sufian's – nothing appears to have moved on. Why haven't attitudes changed? How could we as leaders influence this culture within our school community? We knew we had to be part of the solution.

In mid-November Ofsted visited! It was important to us to get their take on our diverse curriculum. They recognised the areas we had started and the progress we had made.

Our priorities for the new term then took shape:

- meet with pupils from a range of backgrounds, not just those from diverse backgrounds
- plan staff training – get feedback from our parents and discuss the way forward
- deliver training on our January INSET day
- plan our next parent group meeting
- deputy head to deliver PSHE sessions in the year group where there had been racist opinions /comments

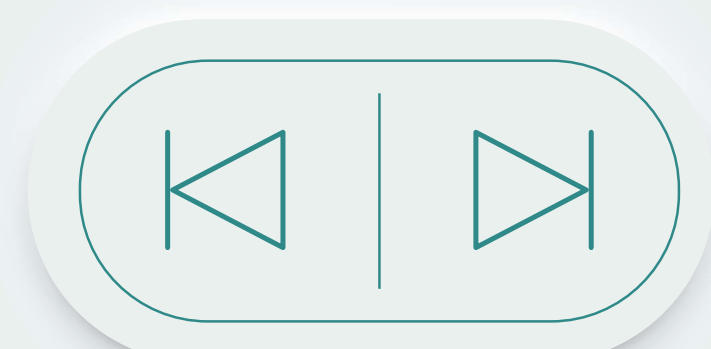
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Despite making what we believe to be a strong start on this very long journey, we now realise more than ever the enormity of the task in hand.

### January/February 2024

At the beginning of the spring term, we attended our third Great Representation conference. That morning our first speaker was Professor David Gillborn, who talked about “Racism and education – What’s going on and what can we do about it?” He reinforced the belief that race is a social construct and shared an insightful quote with us from the editors of Nature Biotechnology: “Pooling people in race silos is akin to zoologists grouping raccoons, tigers, and okapis on the basis that they are all stripey.”

He challenged us with the notion that perhaps the question is: “Why do we continue to search for a connection between race and genetics?”

David addressed the misleading information in the media regarding the underachievement of White working-class boys in our education system. This was extremely pertinent and thought-provoking, as this coverage detracts from the real issues regarding the achievement of the global majority and highlights the role of the media in promoting a certain narrative.

In Toks Olusamokun’s presentation “Dealing with Racist Incidents in School”, she began by talking about the actor David Harewood and his experiences. She mentioned his book, *Maybe I Don’t Belong Here*, which explores the duality of growing up Black and British, and how this contributed negatively to his sense of belonging, ultimately leading to his psychotic breakdown. Again, it is clear that a sense of belonging is crucial for our children’s inner wellbeing and

identity. This theme is like a golden thread, which weaves its way throughout our meetings to ensure we hear the message loud and clear.

Toks shared some scenarios from schools, which we then discussed in our hub groups – offering practical solutions to issues that could undoubtedly arise in our own settings.

The highlight of the day for us was listening to Geeta Patel, headteacher at Mount Grace School, talk about her own lived experiences. She spoke from the heart and, as always, listening to someone sharing their personal lived experience was powerful and enlightening.

Geeta shared her daughter’s experiences of wearing tonal pointe shoes and tights in her ballet class and how that impacted her feeling of belonging so greatly that her exam score increased significantly, from 80% to 93%. This was such a strong example to illustrate the importance and significance of how that feeling of belonging affects children’s engagement, enjoyment and achievement in all they do. It also reinforced how much we had to do in our own school to ensure all children have that feeling of belonging, whatever their background.

Leaving the conference, we felt re-energised and excited for our upcoming meetings and the possible challenges they would bring.

Whilst planning our second staff meeting, we reflected on things we had learned from the training and thought carefully about what we would share with our teachers and support team.

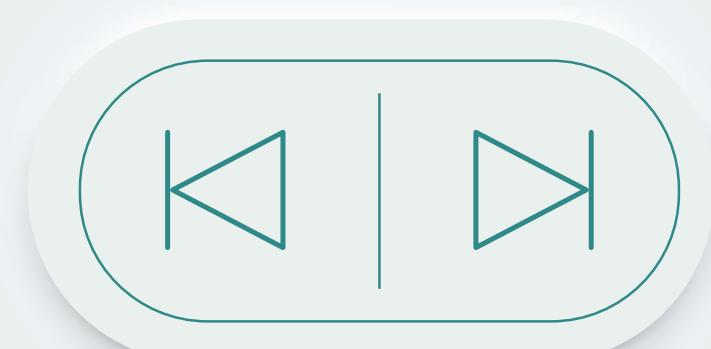
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Even though, as leaders, we were clear about the final destination of our journey, we were aware that this would be a slower process and transition for others. It was clear that before we could continue to diversify our curriculum and introduce meaningful changes, our team still needed to know the *Whys*, and it was our responsibility to ensure that the staff recognised that need. The occasional throwaway comment from staff reinforced that we still had much work to do. Indeed, before everyone could understand the need for race equality and equity, they had to recognise and understand race inequality.

Our agenda would be as follows:

- recapping the salient points from our first meeting
- thinking what a racist looks like
- unconscious bias
- discussing the term *White fragility*
- defining and recognising *White privilege*

Because the majority of our staff are White, their life experiences differ hugely from those of the global majority. By confronting this, we were aware some may feel uncomfortable, but that would be a small price to pay if it enabled them to begin to view things from another perspective.

We began by discussing the type of people we imagine when identifying racists and shared media images of racists. This led onto our discussion about *White fragility*. Robin DiAngelo's book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* encapsulates this topic extremely well and highlights how White people take such offence when accused of racist behaviour. According to DiAngelo, they are more offended by that accusation than by the existence of racism itself.

After that we moved on to talking about *White privilege* and discussed the work of the writer Peggy McIntosh, who first conceived the notion of the term. We shared her definition, which opened up more debate:

I have come to see *White privilege* as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious.

*White privilege* is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks.

Much discussion followed, and it was obvious that some White and light-skinned staff found it difficult to identify and articulate how they had benefitted from *White privilege* during their own life, as it formed such a huge part of their own lived experience.

We then shared a short film, which illustrated how life is not a level playing field, and how the colour of our skin influences our life chances.

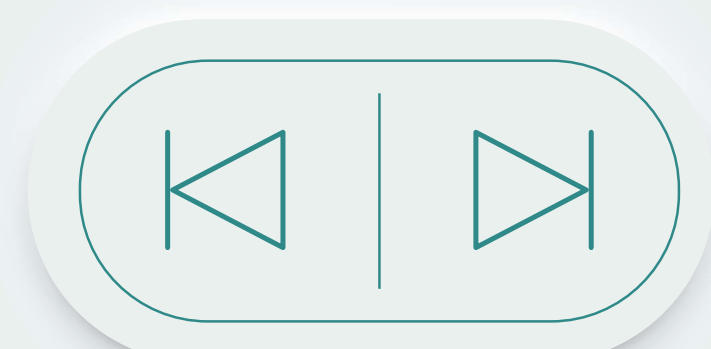
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Finally, we watched a video clip demonstrating how school children have misconceptions about different communities, and how this can lead to prejudice and discrimination in our own young people, who are exposed to the same images and headlines in the media. This is something we have been addressing as part of our whole-school assemblies and PSHE curriculum, to raise awareness amongst our children. We want them to develop that sense of allyship.

Towards the end of our meeting, we felt the mood was sombre; people were reflecting on their own lived experiences. This is exactly what we had hoped for.

At the beginning of February, we had our second meeting with our parent working group. We were less nervous in this instance, as we felt confident in their support and we knew that they understood what we were aiming for. On this occasion we were joined by new parents keen to support us on our journey. We had planned to share our history curriculum with them – fresh eyes viewing it from a diverse perspective would help us to move it forward in the right direction. However, as these parents did not attend the first meeting, we repeated the original presentation. This led on to discussion about the reasons for our journey, their lived experiences and allyship. One parent shared her experiences of racism in European countries after leaving Africa and of colourism within her own community. She initially expressed scepticism at the intent of our journey. By the end of our meeting, she felt reassured that we were serious about change and was pleased she had attended.

Our next task was to prepare for our hub group's visit to Wood End. We were looking forward to sharing all we had achieved so far across our curriculum and would welcome our visitors' feedback. We were also keen for them to speak with some of our pupils of colour so those pupils could share their lived experiences of life at Wood End. Our visitors spoke to eight children across Years 5 and 6. As a way in, the children shared their history and art work. Conversations then centred around their sense of belonging at Wood End. The feedback we received was very positive. The children expressed that they felt welcomed and part of Wood End, and that the school does a lot of work on core values. They also said they had not come across racism at Wood End.

### March 2024

At our penultimate conference, the first speaker was Ruth-Anne Lenga – associate professor and programme director at UCL's Centre for Holocaust Education. Her presentation focused on "Addressing Antisemitism" and the rise in racist incidents, especially since 7 October. With her we explored the historical culture of hatred of Jews and how events in the Middle East always impacted negatively on Jewish communities around the world. Why was this? How was this still the case today?

Our discussion was especially relevant considering the events in Gaza at present and provided much food for thought. Ruth-Anne addressed racial stereotypes widely held about Jewish people and the hate crimes they have to endure on a regular basis. The most powerful images for us were of Jewish cemeteries being vandalised with racist symbols – Jewish people are never safe, even when they have been laid to rest.

At present we have very few families who identify as Jewish, but last year we experienced an antisemitic comment towards a Jewish child in school, which we

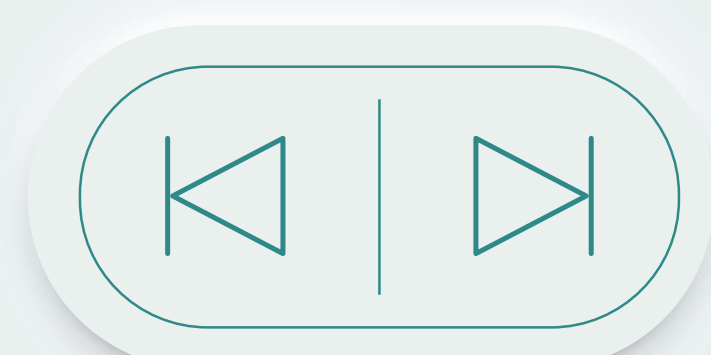
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addressed. Maybe we should be doing more? Indeed, as part of our Early Years curriculum, we celebrate Hanukkah, and our RE curriculum focuses on Judaism in Year 2 and Year 5. This work could easily extend to commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day across the whole school on 27 January each year. Reaching out to a Jewish speaker would definitely support us in this endeavour, and this is something we are committed to pursuing moving forward.

After lunch we heard from colleagues: the headteacher and deputy headteacher from Margaret Wix School in St Albans. They shared their Great Representation journey, which they began last year. It was obvious that they had worked tirelessly to decolonise their curriculum and ensure that every child experiences a sense of belonging in their school. This journey had involved everyone in their school community and was awe-inspiring. Of course, the stars of the show were their children. Members of their school parliament spoke passionately about their school, explaining how they felt seen and heard. They described how everyone is treated with respect and how much they love their school. They were simply outstanding.

We felt that their journey appeared very similar to our own in the way they had approached race equity. The International Week at Margaret Wix was especially impressive. Each year they focus on different countries and cultures from across the world, and the children learn about the cultures, faiths and languages spoken. During this week they celebrate the diverse cultures within their school community and everyone is involved, including parents and families sharing food and traditions. It sounded like an amazing experience!

Listening to their presentation reiterated to us that we were definitely moving in the right direction:

- Our reading curriculum is diverse – we are sure of this.
- Our art curriculum is focused on a range of artists from diverse backgrounds.
- We have planned an art week for the summer term – again, this will include artists from diverse backgrounds, including Howardena Pindell and Anish Kapoor.
- We study a wide range of scientists.
- Our English leads are working hard on our writing curriculum to include a wider range of texts.
- In history we have been questioning our approach to World War II. We will now feature more prominently a whole unit on the Windrush generation and not just shoehorn it into a few lessons.
- We have discussed changing our history and geography units in each year group, as many were still reflecting a White European culture.

Our conference finished with Rebecca Woode – headteacher at Woodlands Primary School – sharing her own lived experience. Listening to someone's personal lived experience always grounds us and reinforces our stoic belief in what we are doing.

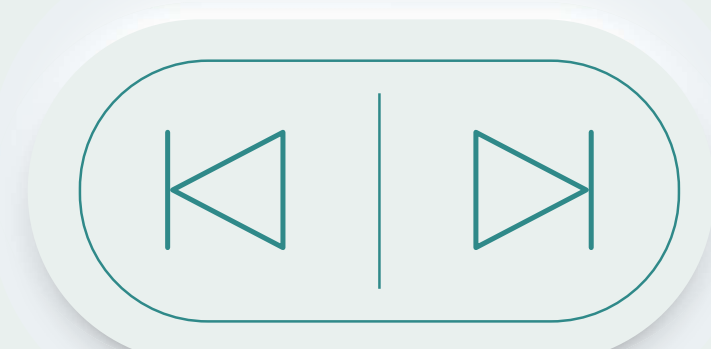
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In March we enjoyed a visit to Oaklands Primary School in Welwyn. Following a tour of their school, we met with Year 5 and 6 children who were really enthusiastic about their learning. They told us about the school's work around diversity and were so enthusiastic about the range of diverse texts they had been reading in class. It was evident that the school has worked hard to develop diversity across their English curriculum, as the texts the children were reading were representative of different backgrounds. This included *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly, *The Windrush Child* by Benjamin Zephaniah, *Stonewall* by Rob Sanders and *The Island* by Armin Greder, to name but a few.

As we approach our final Great Representation conference, we know we are still at the beginning of our journey – a journey we will never truly complete. We still have so much to think about and are hopeful that we will be able to give all our children that sense of belonging, so they feel seen and heard. We will ensure we listen to all members of our school community as we prepare our children for life in a diverse world outside our school gates, so they can play their part as excellent citizens on a global stage.

Actions moving forward:

- further decolonise our curriculum
- change a history/geography unit in each year group to reflect a diverse culture
- ensure what we have achieved so far is embedded
- reflect on whether our curriculum reflects the diversity within our community
- continue to move our colleagues on in their thinking, with CPD
- invite speakers from diverse backgrounds to talk to children
- continue our termly meetings with our parent working group
- review our school policies
- introduce equity and diversity ambassadors across the school
- continue to review our recruitment practice to diversify both our staff and governing body

We feel truly thankful to have had the opportunity to participate in the Great Representation programme. As educators and leaders, it is our responsibility to lead change and challenge inequality wherever it exists. It is no longer enough for us to say our school is not racist, but rather we must be anti-racist, and we look forward to facing the challenges that lie ahead, whatever they might be.

*Clare Smart and Richard Boulton*

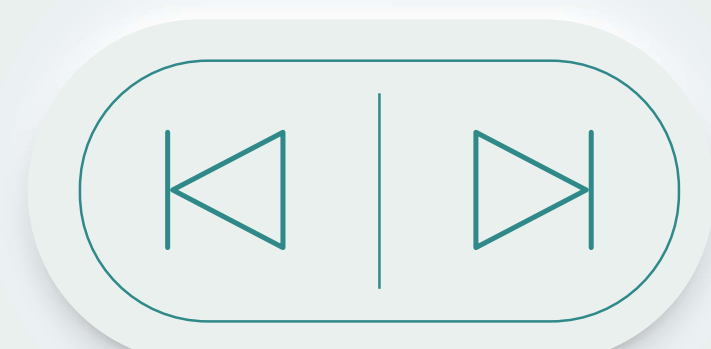
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# WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

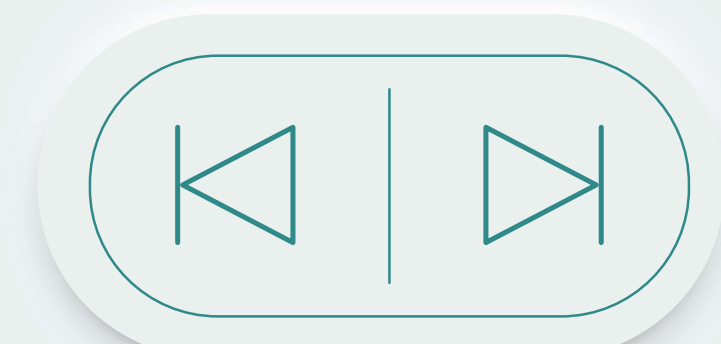
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## September 2023

Woodlands Primary School is broadly average in size. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage; 21% come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. The predominant minority ethnic groups are African (7.5%) or mixed ethnicity (9.5%). In terms of diversity within the staffing structure, 19% of total staff – 46% of which are teachers and 66% of the leadership team – are from ethnic minority groups.

The school motto is *Quality & Achievement*. This is brought to life through our curriculum, values and commitments to each child during their journey with us.

At Woodlands we teach children values that inspire aspirational attributes and attitudes. These can be nurtured to help individuals discover the very best of themselves, enabling them to be good citizens and prepare them for work life. We focus on developing social skills that help children cooperate and relate to others effectively, providing them with the self-esteem and confidence to explore and develop their full potential.

Over the past five years, we have focused on working towards race equity and representation throughout the school. After reviewing our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) statement and rationale with staff and governors, we set about strategically planning and embedding actions to fulfil our equality statements.

Working with subject leaders, we have revised our curriculum to ensure that there is clear representation of diversity. Within Woodlands we know that this is an ongoing piece of work, as there is so much scope to further enhance our curriculum. After reviewing representation in resources and books throughout the school, we invested in a range of texts and teaching aids to ensure that our pupils can see themselves in the school and through their learning.

The impact of resourcing was instant. Children began speaking more openly about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and they were demonstrating more interest in customs and features of others. Cultural understanding and awareness increased. This was recognised in our July 2022 Ofsted report, which stated:

*Pupils enjoy learning about other countries and people that they admire. Pupils read from a wide range of books and stories representing different cultures. They understand and respect that some people and places are different. This inspires pupils and helps them understand the school's values of consideration and kindness.*

The next areas we will address include speaking to pupils throughout the school to find out who their career role models are, and if they feel that they can relate to or see themselves in the careers they desire. Within our values of *be passionate and be ambitious*, we aim to provide speakers and role models from diverse backgrounds to motivate pupils. We plan to have a focus on other diversities within the community such as economic diversity, neurodiversity and physical differences. We will enhance the celebrations of our communities and cultures.

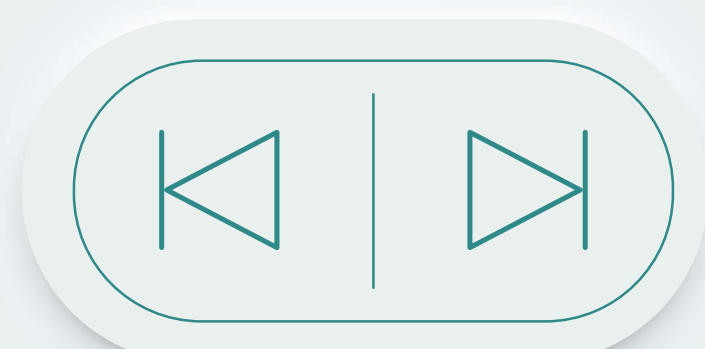
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Through participation in the Great Representation programme, we want to raise the awareness and understanding of the importance of purposeful representation in the curriculum, ensuring that all staff and pupils feel a strong sense of belonging.

### October 2023

Participating in the initial Great Representation seminar gave us clear insight into lived experiences of colleagues on the programme and how, despite being in varied geographical areas, the experiences were very similar. As ethnic minority school leaders, we found it beneficial to compare our own experiences to those of Professor Paul Miller and Cynthia Rowe. Discussions within our hub group paved a way for helpful, open discussions regarding:

- personal experiences
- unease, use of vocabulary
- our own settings
- what we hope to achieve through the programme

It was refreshing and beneficial to be able to hold such open dialogue in a safe environment, during which challenging issues such as institutionalised racism were discussed.

This session reinforced that the work we have completed so far is a positive first step. It instilled a fresh sense of passion in us to continue to strive towards raising pupils who are confident in who they are; are able to believe that they have no ceiling to success; and are positive, supportive and upstanding members of the community.

Following on from the first session, the main area we want to focus on is pupil voice. We want to explore how the children see themselves in the community and in the future. We will work with governors and staff to ensure there is a mutual understanding of the importance of representation for purpose, not simply as a token gesture. This will involve revisiting curriculum plans, raising the profile and understanding of race equity across the school and community, and planning for additional celebrations of diversity.

Completing our first school hub visit was enlightening and extremely beneficial. It allowed us to witness successful strategies used to promote diversity through school values firsthand. Being able to give feedback, ask questions and discuss observational points was invaluable. This was made easier following the time spent together during the first day of the seminars.

Transferrable practice that we saw included:

- examples of how to celebrate festivals for all in the school community
- enhancing the understanding of values through consistent displays
- the importance of teaching the difference between equality and equity

The school visit and seminar have verified that we are on the right path to being able to demonstrate that we are an anti-racist school.

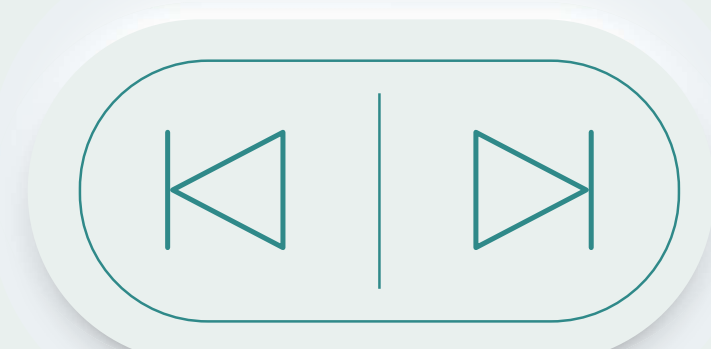
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We know that we have some further challenging dialogues to hold with staff, focusing on unconscious bias, and the reasoning behind – and justification of – the focus on representation. We are passionate about ensuring that Woodlands represents not only the children we have in the school but also the wider community, and that the school teaches our pupils to accept and respect people they meet in the future from all ethnicities.

Prioritising strategic planning and accountability will be key in ensuring that we complete the work we set out to over the year. We have prioritised this work as part of both the school development plan and our appraisal, to ensure that the appropriate time is given.

### November 2023

Our second Great Representation seminar focused on lived experiences, which gave a clear insight into personal experiences from varied ethnic and geographical backgrounds.

As an ethnic minority headteacher, Rebecca was able to share some of her own experiences as a child at school, and of there being a real lack of positive representation in both her school and the media.

We listened to Claire Stewart-Hall discuss her experiences as a White headteacher working in various urban locations, and the importance of White teachers talking about race. In one blog Claire states that:

Teachers can no longer ignore the impact of their own Whiteness; they must take responsibility for learning about how it functions. They need specialists to help them talk about race and support functional and healthy conversations to question and contest institutional racism; to actively look for institutional racism and stop hiding and denying its impact. Schools need to reach out for help to build strategies and discourse to counter the impact that a majority White workforce is having.

We found it extremely beneficial to listen to Claire discussing how colleagues can be colour evasive and we want to take this as a starting point in our school to explore further.

We also heard from speakers Sufian Sadiq – “A Walk in My Shoes”; and Shammi Rahman – “Silence has not protected me or kept me safe”. Both gave personal accounts of their own and their families’ experiences. The speeches shared a raw honesty of the current, historic and potential future difficulties faced by ethnic minorities. Sufian’s emotional honesty about his passionate strive for improvement, the stark reality of stereotypical judgement, and his brutal realisation of the need to protect his young daughter, was an honest reflection of the struggles of internalised racism. The impact of such views was felt around the conference hall and provided a rich opportunity for difficult but honest discussions amongst peers.

Reflections and discussions since the second seminar have enabled us to streamline the focus we will have in school. We have spent time over the past four or five years ensuring there is cultural representation throughout the school – in our curriculum, books and lessons. We are now at the stage where we are enhancing the representation for other groups that may or may not currently be in the school – neurodivergent / physically challenged.

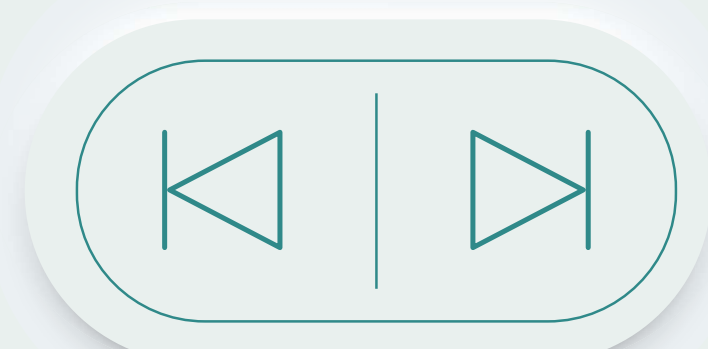
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Our aim is that every child belongs: Do they see themselves in their learning? Do they have visual positive role models to aspire to be like? Are they comfortable being themselves? Do they see a successful future ahead? We have invested in a range of books that depict pupils with neurodiverse conditions such as ADHD/ASD and Tourette syndrome as main characters, along with characters with physical disabilities.

In carrying out pupil voice activity with a range of students, the following questions have helped us see any gaps and areas for focus:

- Who are your role models?
- What are your ambitions for when you are older?
- Who inspires you?
- Is there anyone who looks like you who inspires you?
- Where do you see people that look like you?
- Who do you relate to?

During our visit from hub colleagues on the programme, the findings from these questions were reinforced – the children all feel like they belong and have aspirations. Interestingly, race didn't play a key factor in this. The children all felt that they can achieve with the correct focus and hard work.

Our guests shared that the school has a strong sense of being child-centred and nurturing. The children were all very happy to hold discussions with our guests, sharing how they feel and what their aspirations are. It was extremely beneficial to know that the areas we have been working on over the past four or five years are now embedded.

Our conversations with colleagues have raised some areas that we, as a school, need to focus on now. There is concern over offending others by using the incorrect terms or vocabulary. In some areas there is a lack of understanding of the importance of such work and the impact on those affected of not talking about race. This links directly back to Claire's words. Facilitating open discussions will be our key next step in this journey. We recognise the importance of listening to divergent views and remaining professional at all times; it will be crucial that we create a platform of open respect.

### December 2023

“True belonging doesn't require that we change who we are; it requires that we be who we are.”

– Brené Brown

Halfway through the programme, after learning about personal experiences and the rationale for a change in schools, we are now looking at the curriculum.

At Woodlands, we have spent quality and focused time on developing our curriculum to ensure that it is diverse in representation.

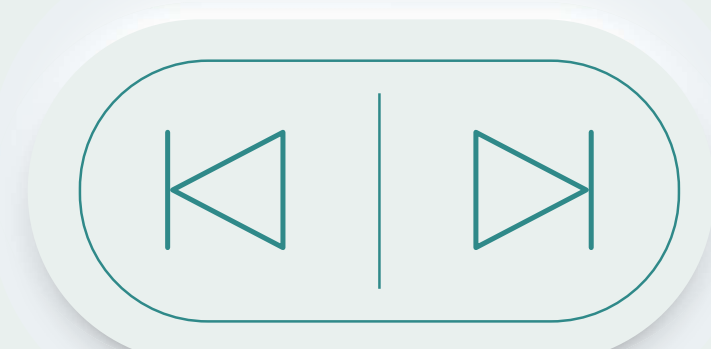
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We initially focused on skin colour and cultures, introducing a plethora of books to the library and all classrooms. It was important to us that these were integrated amongst the other books, not kept separately.

Bennie Kara was our first speaker of Day 3 and talked passionately about how diversity is not a bolt-on. The importance of having diversity embedded in our curriculum is key to usualising it. Having time to sit and think about the fact that everything we teach or are taught about is a viewpoint and one narrative was very helpful. The pupils we teach will have their own views on the world, their peers and political subjects, based on media messaging; the texts they have read; the films they have watched; and from discussions with family, peers and school. If they are being fed one viewpoint or narrative rather than various perspectives, their learning will be limited. Embedding different viewpoints into what we teach will normalise diversity and different opinions. This, in turn, will avoid tokenism.

Bennie's comment, "What I teach is not all there is", was powerful to reflect on. When do we share this with children? Bennie shared research on different types of knowledge:

- powerful
- core
- hinterland
- substantive
- disciplinary

It is important to recognise where our knowledge comes from. We were able to reflect on why we teach what we teach as well as consider how to add different perspectives to a single national narrative of the national curriculum. The success of a culturally rich curriculum requires all staff to fully understand the importance of viewpoints, perspectives and purpose.

Our strategic plan is to evaluate our curriculum and the representation within it, and to add multi-perspectivity to our skills and progression documents, starting with the history curriculum. We will introduce words such as *meanwhile* and *elsewhere*; and we will look carefully at language, for example the use of terms such as *migration* versus *invasions* versus *immigration*.

Seb Gray discussed strategies that he introduced as headteacher in his previous school to ensure that a shared language was used by staff, and that colleagues had a safe space to talk about race and to support a shift of culture. He shared the practical details around setting up a forum for his staff to be able to safely discuss topics on diversity. An inclusive school needs to be inclusively led. Seb shared a self-reflection continuum for an inclusive leader, with four stages of inclusivity: unaware, aware, active and advocate.

Later in the afternoon, Laurie O'Brien – another headteacher – shared an honest reflection of the challenges that leaders can face when making changes in the curriculum and communicating them to families and, more importantly, how he overcame these.

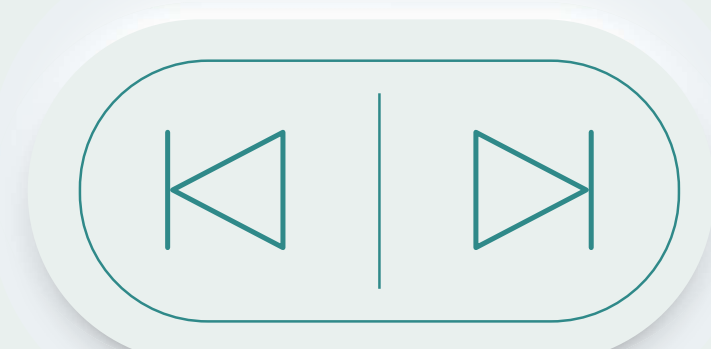
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Strategies included inviting parents to the school to be part of whole-school religious celebrations, shared heritage learning and open discussions. This action strengthened relationships in his school. When discussing facing challenges head-on, Laurie encouraged leaders to consider *If we don't, who will?*

## January 2024

Our fourth Great Representation seminar focused on what racism is, what we can do to tackle racism in our schools, and how to deal effectively with any racist incidents.

We listened to David Gillborn, emeritus professor of Critical Race Studies at Birmingham University. David spoke about the idea of being colour-blind – the belief that one should treat all persons equally, without regard to their race. David argued that in practice this does not work. This ideology promotes ignorance of existing inequalities, refusing to engage with race equality, and defending the status quo.

Following the presentation by David Gillborn, we reflected as a hub group and discussed how this affects the children in our school. We spoke about how we, especially the schools that are not highly multicultural, often discuss the importance of valuing differences and respecting others; but how this is often something that the children do not experience until later life, when they are in a different environment. We felt it was essential that the children in our schools are able to mix with children of different cultures at this young age, and we have discussed organising school visits for Year 6 pupils. During these visits we plan to allow the children to learn about and celebrate one another's differences. We plan for this to take place in the summer term, over three school days. This will allow the children to put the discussions had in class into practice.

We took part in a workshop led by Toks Olusamokun, HFL Education race equity adviser, who spoke about how to deal effectively with racist incidents in school. We were presented with primary and secondary school scenarios of racist incidents and how they were dealt with. We discussed the steps we would take if the scenarios took place in our schools, and it was interesting to see the variety of responses. The task gave us confidence in our school approach, as the conversations with the group and input from Toks validated how we deal with incidents that arise in our own school setting. A reminder about prejudice-based bullying, the Equality Act, and the government's "Preventing and Tackling Bullying" guidance, brought us back to the fundamental requirements of teachers. Racism can be subtle; it can be a build-up of small incidents and, ultimately, it can stop individuals believing that they have a place or belong in a school.

Toks took time to discuss different types of racism, categorising:

- victimisation
- covert racism
- harassment
- discrimination
- overt racism

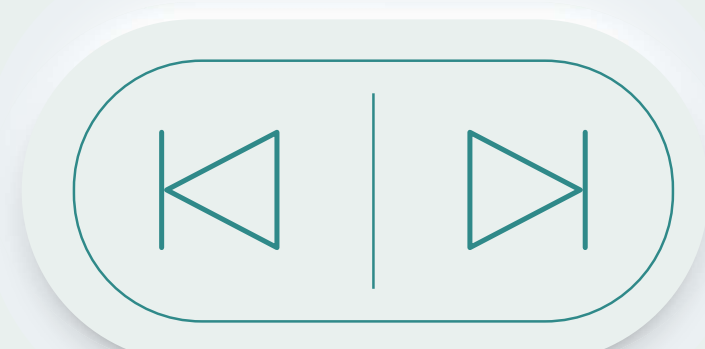
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We were able to reflect on the need for clear policies for consistency, and the comparison of time spent investigating an incident versus time supporting the victim. It was beneficial to look in-depth at some mistakes that have been made in school investigations, focusing on the key concepts of bias, adultification, invisibility and hypervisibility. Ultimately, we need to listen, support, report and monitor all incidents.

We heard from Geeta Patel, headteacher of Mount Grace School, who spoke about her lived experiences and those of her older and younger family generations. She spoke about attitudes based on skin tone and shared an advert for Fair and Lovely cream – a bleaching cream that clearly portrayed that lighter skin would lead to success in business and life. She also spoke about how representations on television often fulfil a stereotype.

Geeta discussed the experiences she has faced with her daughter. In one example, she spoke about how one of her daughters had a passion for ballet. She would aspire to be a swan but, when googling these images, only saw White females playing the roles. Her confidence was low as this didn't feel like a realistic aspiration. Her view changed when Geeta was able to find ballet tights and shoes in her daughter's skin tone. Geeta spoke about how her daughter's ballet results were the highest they had ever been after she performed in her tonal attire. She felt that she now belonged in this world of classical ballet. This reiterated the importance of ensuring children see themselves represented.

For our fourth hub visit, we visited St Mary's Catholic School. It was interesting to have the opportunity to spend time in a diverse secondary school. There was a very clear agenda to support pupils from different backgrounds, and the sense of belonging was clear to see in the pupils' behaviour and confidence in openly discussing race awareness, and in the overall environment in the school. It was evident that St Mary's has promoted the importance of making everyone feel that they belong, and it was lovely to see all children well engaged and thoroughly enjoying the inclusive curriculum being taught to them.

## February 2024

Our fifth seminar started with a talk by Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga from UCL's Centre of Holocaust Education, who spoke about the importance of addressing antisemitism, particularly in current times. We reflected on the ways in which we, as educators, can comfortably share local and international news with our pupils to help them understand the world around them, whilst maintaining political impartiality.

Ruth-Anne shared her experiences and stories of Jewish friends who lived through and survived the Holocaust and how the recently increased number of antisemitic incidents in the UK has impacted them. It was beneficial to have time to think about how any local antisemitic incidents are dealt with in school. Ruth-Anne spoke about the current conflict between Palestine and Israel and the direct impact this has on Jews based in the UK. The question was posed as to why antisemitism has increased so much in the UK since the war – would UK citizens be targeted if there was a conflict in another country? She spoke about how comedian David Baddiel was horrified to hear of a headteacher of a Jewish school feeling it necessary to send a message out advising children that they may wish to hide Star of David necklaces and refrain from wearing a logoed blazer to and from school for their safety.

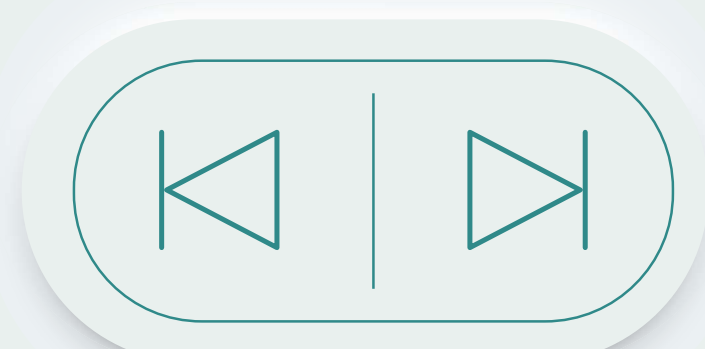
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Next, Penny Rabiger – researcher and education consultant – spoke to us about creating an anti-racist school. A powerful concept that Penny spoke about was the fact that you can't be an anti-racist school until you learn how to see racism. This has to be a starting point for schools. Do staff know what racism looks like in its most subtle forms? Are they confident in addressing this? Do they understand the impact that this can have on pupils and staff? What does racism look like in our school, local area, nationally? If it can't be seen, it can't be addressed.

Penny reminded us to think about who and what education is for. We know that children need to be seen and celebrated in school, but how do we shift discourse? How do we address subtle racism that can easily be undetected? It was quite shocking to hear that research indicates that there are still educational professionals who have lower expectations of some groups of children. This is unacceptable. In order to be an anti-racist school, racism has to be seen by all. How do we help those who are not subject to racism see it, and what is in it for them? The necessity of engaging all members of the school community is vital in moving forward with this agenda. The need for inclusion, policy change and outcomes for pupils is merely the start of the process.

Penny described ways to help staff understand different forms of race theory as the first step towards becoming an anti-racist establishment. She shared some clear steps in beginning the journey to becoming an anti-racist school. She advised that schools should focus on:

- **Governance, leadership and strategy.** Who is in charge of dealing with racism? How is this communicated? What are the current policies and practices?
- **School environment.** How do you define racism? What is your school environment? What do you need? Does your school indicate that it is okay to not be White? What does racism look like in your school/community?
- **Professional learning and development.** Where is it in your recruitment process? What training do you provide?
- **Hidden curriculum.** Do the experiences we give our pupils teach them about a variety of cultures or ultimately prepare them for a world suited to a White, middle-class member of society? Are different subjects *off limits* for some groups of children?
- **Pedagogy and curriculum.** How does our curriculum ensure that people belong? What are we trying to achieve? How do we diversify the curriculum? When you look at what the characters are doing, is this stereotypical? Are children from other groups being represented in the school?
- **Parents, carers and community.** Is there a place for parents to have a voice in the school? And parent governors?

Penny said that racism is a permanent fixture. We need to embed anti-racism, forever, and ask ourselves, *What is racism doing in a nice field like education?*

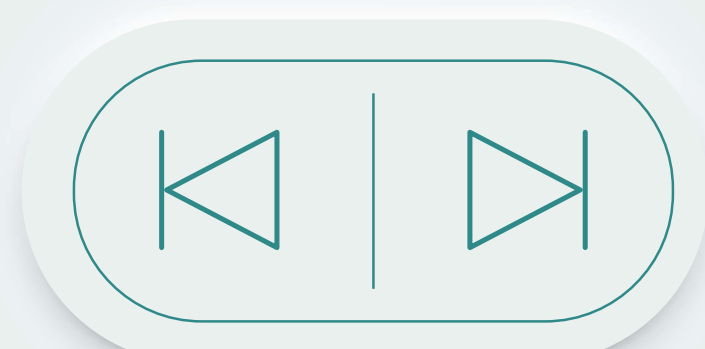
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Later in the day, two members of staff and a range of pupils from Margaret Wix Primary School shared their firsthand experiences of the impact of taking part in the Great Representation programme last year. It was wonderful to hear about their changes to their curriculum; representation in books; updated equity, diversity and inclusion flyers; and monthly updates for the staff. This was shared as *The Wix Way*.

Following focused research, staff at Margaret Wix ensure that they consider outcomes and barriers to learning faced by different groups of pupils, to ensure those historically making less progress are supported to reach their full potential.

A group of six pupils talked directly to us about their experiences in school, the events that are held and celebrated, the books that they love to read, and enrichment activities. These were all spoken about with confidence and passion. A video shared by the school illustrated the variety of opportunities that leaders have put in place. Examples included hosting an international week and celebration of culture, “People like me” displays, and displaying a tree of heritage flags for all pupils.

Our seminar finished with a personal account by our head, Rebecca Woode. We listened to her personal accounts of positive progress that has supported her, particularly over the past five years, in building confidence. The talk was focused on how others can support progress in anti-racism and acceptance.

Having completed our final hub visit, it has been amazing to see some of the excellent steps that have been implemented in supporting this cause. During our visit to Crabtree Primary School we were exceptionally impressed by the confidence, passion and integrity of the many pupils we spoke with.

*Rebecca Woode and Khairun Islam*

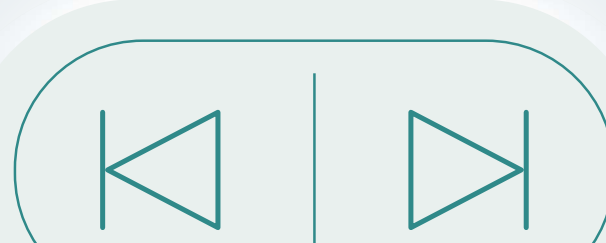
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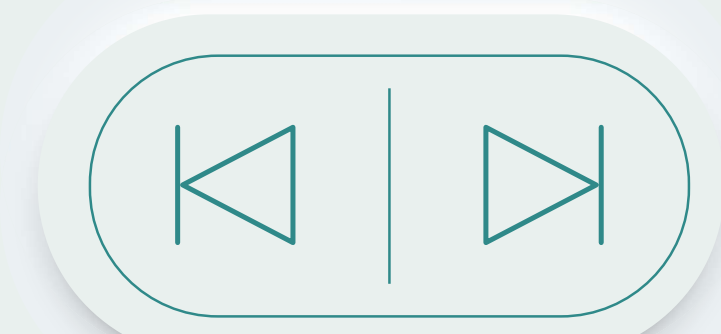


# WORMLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

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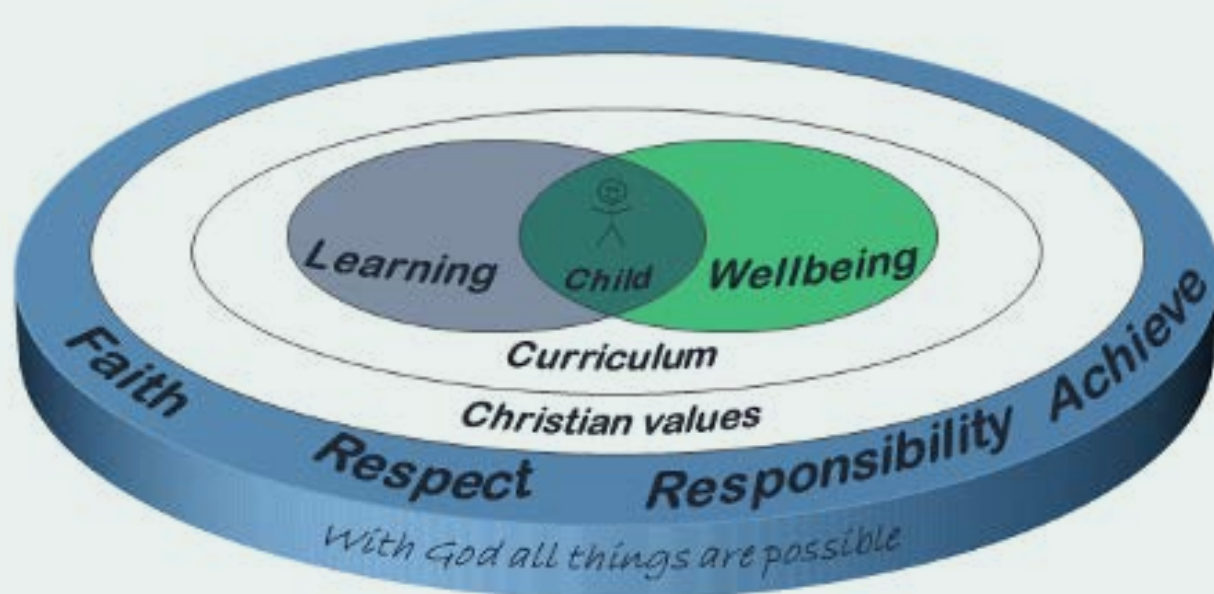


## September 2023

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

– Maya Angelou

The school mission is to provide a unique ethos, environment and curriculum in which all participants are welcomed, valued and enabled to flourish. Our child-centred model recognises both the importance of wellbeing and achievement. We chose a career in education to make a difference, to do better, to serve a community, to improve the world.



Wormley's child-centred school mission

Our vision is that, from arrival at Wormley CofE Primary School, each child should grow in their awareness of themselves and others, moving forward in their learning journey and maximising their learning potential in school and beyond. Our intention is that they come to know that they are loved by God and that, through him, all things are possible.

But for all children to truly flourish, we need to consider how the world is seen from different positions – *standpoint theory*. Nobody stands nowhere. We know that everyone sees the world through their own lens or a mix of lenses. We need to learn about and understand those lenses better – growing in greater awareness of ourselves and others.

We want to be a more inclusive school in our ever-changing community. Over the past ten years, our community has been constantly changing and evolving. Currently, 59% of our cohort identify as White British. Of the remaining 41%, Turkish, Polish and Albanian children make up the next three significant groups. 16% of our children have English as an additional language, and there are 27 different first languages spoken in our school.

We are looking to the Great Representation programme as a vehicle to challenge us in our thinking and to help us to learn better and do better.

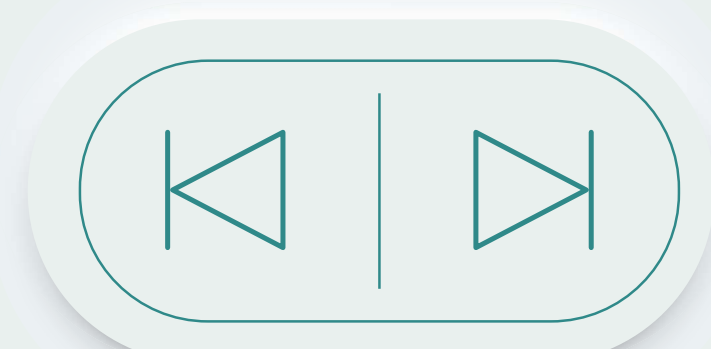
## October 2023

Since starting the Great Representation programme and attending the church school conference about equity, diversity and inclusion, we have had the privilege of listening to and reading from academics and individuals with life experiences that they are willing to share. They offer different lenses or perspectives. As a result, we have begun to see discrimination, stereotyping and racism more frequently. What is not clear are the reasons for this. Some things that have always been there we are now noticing as if the “skin has been peeled from our eyes”. Other more overt examples of racism, such as name-calling, appear to be on the rise.

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Not long after Day 1 and the week prior to hosting our hub schools, we had a disclosure from a Black British girl in KS2 that she had been called a derogatory name by a peer at lunchtime. The girl sobbed as she explained it was the first time it had happened to her. She knew that it had happened to her mum when she was young, but she hadn't expected to experience it herself. Listening to the girl and feeling her heartbreak was upsetting. Explaining the incident to her mother was embarrassing and difficult. However, the experience reminded us of the need to be courageous and to start making meaningful change. By deliberately engaging the girl and her mother in conversations about their experience, we agreed to make the moment an opportunity for change and empowerment.

The girl brought in books from home about the Windrush and other Black icons. She read the books at assembly and shared them with her class. She felt empowered to share her family's history, and the children heard about life from a different perspective. Not only did this empower the girl and educate her peers, it improved our confidence and determination to lead change.

Now that we are talking more to children and parents of colour about their backgrounds and experiences of school, we are developing an uncomfortable understanding that, for many, racism is more of an issue than we had realised. Because children were not reporting incidents very often, we had allowed ourselves to form a false perception that things were better than they are. What we have learnt is that some children and parents often feel they experience discrimination and exclusion at school.

As participants of the Great Representation programme, we are developing our racial literacy. However, we are keen to share our learning with the wider teaching team, so we led a staff CPD session shortly after Day 1. We shared the purpose of the programme and offered teachers the chance to talk about and explore the topic. Unsurprisingly, we realised that there is some reluctance to engage in dialogue about ethnicity and race for fear of offending others through the use of inappropriate language. We also identified the teachers' knowledge of history and what Professor Miller would define as context, and reality is variable.

It became obvious that we needed a clear plan to lead staff learning and to consider the experience of the children. This is not about quick wins. We looked at the data from the perspective of ethnicity and discussed the range of backgrounds in our school and how our curriculum and experiences reflect these communities currently.

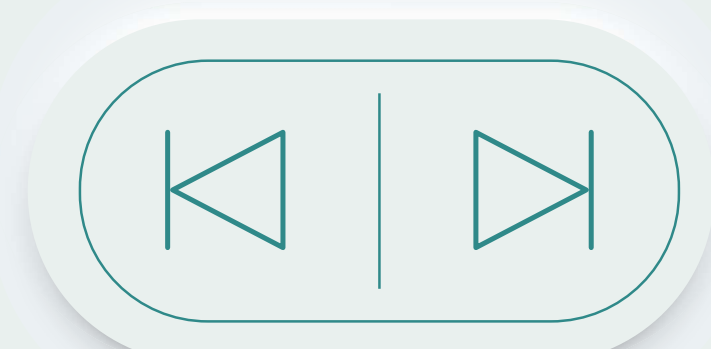
The topic of Black History Month (BHM) was debated. How do we make it authentic and not a one-time token gesture? We agreed that BHM was important and agreed to link it to our history topics. This was challenging due to the limited recorded material relevant for the primary historical periods from the national curriculum, which was illuminating in itself. We also started celebrating contemporary icons from various cultural and professional backgrounds.

We hosted the first hub school visit. Our discussion was open and highly supportive. Talking about our school and showing colleagues around was a reflective experience. What we have realised is that, although we have always done things to teach children about equity, diversity and inclusion and the harm of racism, we have never committed to doing it as intelligently and intentionally as we are now.

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Our next steps are to:

- reflect on our recruitment process through the lens of a non-White professional
- look at how we represent different cultures around the school; we try to make school feel like home, but whose home?
- discuss the project at the next full governing body meeting
- continue to source educational books for children that celebrate and explore diversity

### November 2023

Day 2 of the Great Representation programme was a very memorable day, particularly because of the talk given by Sufian Sadiq, director of the Teaching School at the Chiltern Learning Trust. He spoke of his daughter's experience of being a Brown-skinned child in a village school attended predominantly by White families and staff. He explained his children's cognitive dissonance with the perception they had of their loving daddy and the perception of some of the public who expressed overt racism towards him; "Daddy, are you a bad man?" Through the use of photos, he helped us to see the image of evil that has been consciously portrayed in the media since 9/11: Arabic, male, with Brown skin and long beard.

At the time of his talk, the conflict between Hamas and Israel had recently begun. Children were dying on both sides. Sufian expressed the pain he and his Muslim community were going through. Poignantly, he challenged us to wonder why the British public was so open to the idea of offering sanctuary to Ukrainian women and children and welcoming refugees; yet we watch Palestinian women and children affected by war in Gaza and say nothing. He finished his talk with the revelation that he no longer believes it is possible to stop racism.

Sufian's talk prompted much discussion on our table. How do we feel about a keynote speaker's sense of despondency about a mission we have just signed up to? Is Sufian getting support? Are we racist about who we are passionate about? Are our biases so deep that we can't recognise them? Are Sufian's feelings shared by children and their families in our schools? How does Sufian's perspective affect those with links to Israel?

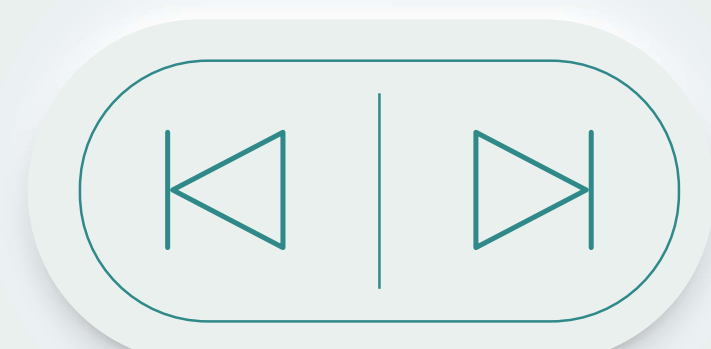
Our second school visit was hosted by Roundwood Park Secondary School. This was a unique experience for us as primary school teachers. The headteacher and his staff were very open and encouraged us to ask questions and look carefully around the school. Our discussion as a hub group was once again rich and thought-provoking. A particular highlight to us was a discussion with department leads on decolonising the curriculum, and with a Year 13 group of pupils about their experiences. Discussions with the heads of department were insightful. We asked questions about their decision making, including controversial topics such as English texts.

The school was clearly thinking very deeply and bravely about these issues. The Year 13 group were a cross-section of children from different backgrounds, experiences and responsibilities.

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Some had transferred into the sixth form from Luton schools. They spoke candidly of some concerns they had had about belonging in a less multiracial school. They shared their experiences, including how the school had responded to incidents of racism. Hearing from these older children helped us to imagine how we might support children at an earlier stage.

After the genuine interest in our Black History Month assemblies, we continued to look at Black British icons at the beginning of our next topic: Celebrating Difference. Children recorded themselves reading diverse picture books, and they are currently planning their own presentations celebrating their cultural heritage.

We have shared the aims of our Great Representation programme with the governing body and included it as an item on a recent meeting agenda. Some governors have engaged in behaviour and race equality and anti-racism training. We shared incidents of racism, and governors asked curious questions to challenge our responses and develop their understanding. This was cross-referenced with our equalities plan, which outlines our intention to address issues of racism. Comparing the data made it clear that incidents of racism are higher than last year. Although the reasons for an increase are not entirely clear, we are certain that improved reporting by children, staff and parents is contributing. Better reporting is a positive step; however, it must lead to positive action.

We have reviewed and adapted our adverts for vacancies to try to encourage candidates from diverse backgrounds. This is an initial step to develop the whole recruitment process.

We continue to strive to make the school environment reflect our community. We have created displays that include artefacts that reflect and represent our community. Some parents have contributed to these displays. The displays include literature and images that celebrate different backgrounds. We have added multilingual texts. There are also traditional items from family homes; for example, we have household items donated by Turkish families, including teapots, cups, the evil eye for the front of the door, and slippers. We want a welcoming environment, where children see familiar things and feel like they belong. A child was browsing at one of the displays. He showed how the teapots are used at his home to make Turkish tea and explained how visitors are given slippers to wear when they arrive at his house. He also read from the Turkish story books.

We wonder if small, subtle changes like changes to the environment; and thoughtful, deliberate learning opportunities might be a way forward.

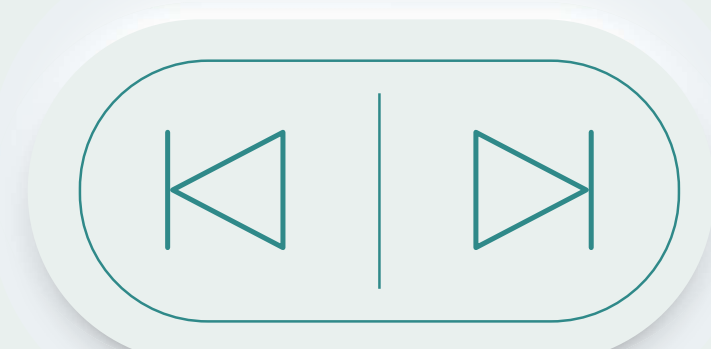
Our next steps are to:

- develop an action plan for our Great Representation programme
- consider an anti-racism or EDI policy
- capture pupil voice – selecting children from different ethnicities as a focus group to better understand the findings of our recent pupil questionnaire
- respond to pupils' request for a cultural day by including a range of stakeholders in further consultation
- begin decolonising the curriculum by arranging an audit of our school

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## December 2023

In December, following our third Great Representation seminar, we were quite fired up with ideas about how we might lead the change we wanted. We had sharpened our moral purpose, consulted with and listened carefully to others, and wanted to formulate a plan for change. It was helpful to hear ideas from Bennie Kara about creating and implementing a diverse curriculum. We know that we need to question more deeply the intent of our curriculum and ensure that it best serves our community of learners. Awareness of diversity has to become part of our culture.

We began by mapping out an action plan with some key dates for this year but also beyond. Some aspects of change will take longer, but we need to maintain our impetus. Some of the actions include:

- **Building a diverse pupil voice group.** We have begun this by inviting children from a broad range of backgrounds to join our development group. Others may later choose to join and some will leave, but we have a group to start with.
- **Bringing our governing body along on the journey.** We began a conversation about diversity through the “Head’s Report”. As a result, several governors opted to book onto race equality training to further educate themselves. We have planned a strategic discussion for the next full governing body meeting in February.
- **Bringing staff along on the journey.** We have done this by sharing some reading, informal discussions, coaching questions from book looks and observations, and encouraging others to attend CPD such as the HFL Education National Disadvantaged Conference. This has encouraged staff to think and question our usual. We intend to find further training for staff, particularly about unconscious bias.
- **Thinking about messages we give.** We have thought about messaging in lots of ways. An example is that we promote healthy eating in our newsletters and have traditionally shared the NHS Eatwell guidance. We have found that there are culturally adapted versions of “Eatwell Guide”, so we now share those. Another example is our cultural displays. They are constantly growing, contributed to by staff and families. They give messages about belonging and prompt all kinds of discussions.

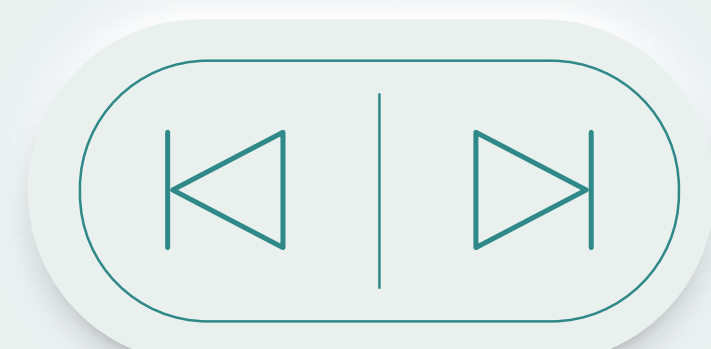
Attending the HFL Education Disadvantaged Conference really urged us to think about disadvantage and diversity together. It was interesting to hear from two guest speakers about the idea of code. When you’re in a particular group, you know the code. If you don’t know the code, how do you fit in? One speaker talked about teaching children to be code breakers. This made us reflect on training about autism. A male speaker talked about the difficulties he had as a young person understanding unspoken codes that he just didn’t pick up. He spoke about the unspoken code of using urinals by men in toilets. Not knowing this code, he often found himself in trouble. It made us think, *What is the code in our school? Who knows it?*

There is a lot to think about, but we are committed to thinking about diversity in its fullness and taking one step at a time.

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## January 2024

Day 4 was another opportunity to be exposed to thought-provoking presentations and table discussions. Professor David Gillborn talked about critical race theory and the implications for schools. David's talk helped to frame a common experience the public have from some media sources through the cycle of convergence, divergence and reclamation. We couldn't help feeling some despair about the enormity of the challenge we face to achieve genuine race equity. We described the feeling at the time as wanting to "turn back to shore". Like the ocean, the challenge seemed too deep and vast to safely navigate.

Although Toks Olusamokun's session continued to explore the significant challenges and therefore did little to alleviate the feeling of despair, she presented some very practical guidance for responding to racist incidents. This has led to our school developing a scripted response to support adults with addressing a racist incident. This will be shared at our next CPD session.

Later in the day, a life raft appeared in the form of headteacher Geeta Patel, whose session was very uplifting. Her personal stories, from the perspective of a mixed-heritage British person and a headteacher, helped us to further understand how attitudes to inclusion and racism can affect people's sense of belonging, acceptance and confidence.

To try and get some order to our busy minds, we developed an action plan and identified seven key objectives. This has helped to focus our attention and assign responsibilities:

1. develop an action plan and anti-racism/EDI policy
2. capture pupil voice, selecting children from different ethnicities as a focus group to better understand findings
3. respond to pupils' request for a cultural day
4. begin decolonising the curriculum
5. plan how to set up a parent focus group
6. teach EDI
7. provide CPD for staff to develop a culture of anti-racism and race equity

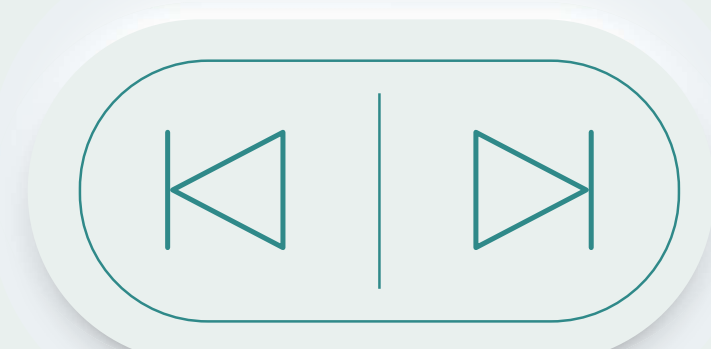
We have selected a diverse group of pupils from each year group to participate in pupil discussions about behaviour, inclusion and race equity. The children from each year group represent diverse ethnicity, sexes, attainment, academic needs, disabilities and experiences. For example, we have included pupils that have been affected by racialised incidents.

A group of Year 5 and Year 6 children wrote a song to promote our three rights of the school: *Safe, Learn, Respect*. What was pleasing is that the children chose to write about the importance of belonging and race equity without prompting. The children wrote the song with very little adult support and recorded it with a sound supervisor; it is published on our website.

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## February 2024

Our next school visit was to the Poppy Academy schools – St John’s Infant and Nursery School, and Fair Field Junior School in Radlett. Fair Field had recently completed a project where all the children represented themselves by recording on a whiteboard “I belong and I am ...”. The children wrote about their heritage and strengths as a person. The project was celebrated throughout the school and displayed by a black-and-white photo of each child holding their whiteboard.

When we spoke to a group of pupils about the project, they were overwhelmingly positive about this opportunity to express their identity and celebrate their backgrounds. They also commented that they thought the project helped pull the school together. This was inspirational for us, as we had done something similar many years ago based on a storytelling project, which we were planning to rekindle this year. After this visit we had a clear idea of how we could do this and agreed to use the children from Fair Field to help launch our own version.

We combined our intention to involve parents in our evaluation of the school’s Christian ethos, with our intention to discuss race equity by attempting to start a faith group. Unfortunately, the first session was attended only by staff, but we plan to try again with parents. The discussion between staff was very enlightening, so we learnt that it would be best to continue having a separate group for staff to enable them to be more open. This might evolve in time.

We installed a history timeline and a world map in our dining area. Because of our participation in the Great Representation programme, we were far more consultative on representing historic people of significance across a range of cultures. We also looked to include key features of places around the world that reflected our school population, for example the Blue Mosque in Turkey.

The month ended with Day 5 of the project, where there was a particular focus on antisemitism. This was helpful because this specific racism was not so familiar to us. Our school has always had very few children who identify as Jewish; currently there is one. Speakers Penny Rabiger and Ruth-Anne Lenga talked of the persistent and disturbing daily experiences of the Jewish community. Penny explored the idea of an anti-racist school. It was especially interesting to think about the following four key concepts. Our aim should be to develop an awareness of the role racism plays and improve the conditions now, as a “post-racial world is a fantasy”.

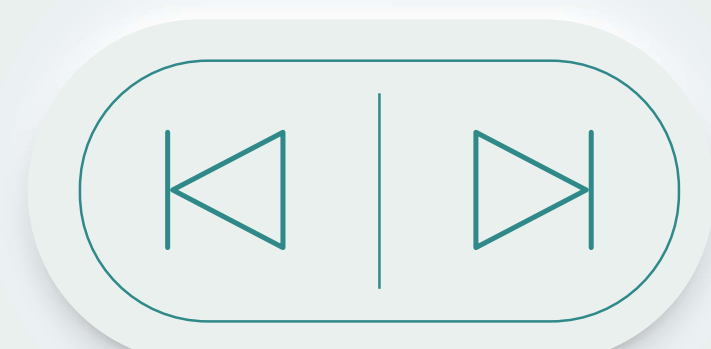
1. race as a social construct
2. racism being normal, not aberrant
3. racism being permanent, with no post-racial domain
4. White ignorance and interest converge

Over lunch, some of the presenters joined us. We discussed how impactful the project had been but how emotionally challenging it was to hear wave after wave of difficult experiences faced by racialised groups, and the acceptance of academics that there is no solution but only small steps of change.

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We had an interesting discussion around whether some racial groups experience more or worse racism than others. Paul Miller had said on Day 1 that all racism is equally unacceptable and there is “no race to the bottom”. Was this the case?

Our next steps are:

- holding unconscious bias CPD with governors
- capturing pupil voice
- planning a whole-school project to celebrate identity and enhance belonging
- beginning decolonising the curriculum by arranging an audit of our school
- delivering CPD to teachers to develop our response to racial incidents and planning our belonging project

### March 2024

We led a session for governors about our work so far with the Great Representation programme, which turned out to be a very powerful and supportive activity.

We began by sharing our action plan and our reflections on each of the objectives to date. Governors were very supportive of our intentions and vision for the project in school. As governors began to ask questions, one of our White male governors asked for more detail on our intention to “decolonise the curriculum” and how we were proposing to “retell history”. This was an anxious moment for us, as we were uncertain how the conversation was about to evolve.

Our governing body is not ethnically diverse, and it includes members who have very conservative views, support the idea of monarchy and believe in traditional British values. Although each of these ideologies is entirely acceptable and not in opposition to our goal of race equity, we had never provided a platform to discuss them openly. We were sensitive to potential stereotypical views or unconscious bias about race equity particularly, as our school is in an area that is associated with far-right presence (according to the “State of Hate 2021” report by the charity HOPE not hate).

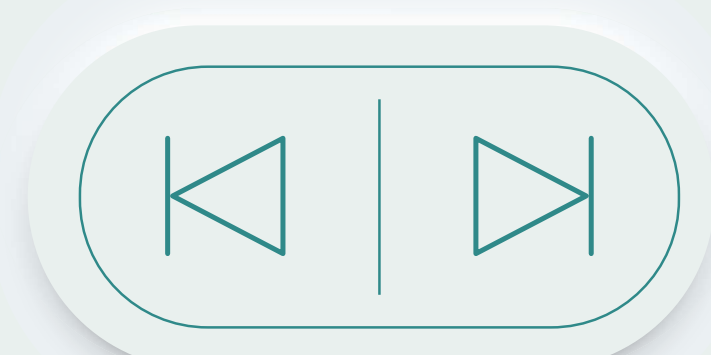
We answered the questions with details of how we are looking to diversify the curriculum and materials so that all of the children, regardless of any protected characteristic, would feel represented. At first we talked confidently about the role of non-White people in British history and the typical retelling of history that erases the role of non-White British people. This led to further questions that appeared to challenge our aims. Adding to our anxiety was the fact we had one non-White, female parent governor, who would not only be thinking about her personal experience of this discussion but also how this might affect her children attending the school. However, this governor joined in the discussion.

Initially, the exchange of questions and responses was a little uncomfortable because the White male governor continued to ask questions and seemed to challenge the responses. However, as the discussion continued, it emerged that there was no challenge to our vision or the idea of diversifying the curriculum. Instead, there was a misunderstanding of what was intended by decolonising the curriculum. This discussion was valuable for a number of reasons. Firstly, it really challenged us to be clear about what we mean when we talk about decolonising the curriculum.

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Also, being brave and taking the time to explore this topic allowed us to deepen everyone's understanding and bring us all closer. The discussion lasted for nearly an hour and ended with every single governor being completely supportive of the vision. We are also pleased to be adding a new non-White and female governor to the board.

We had planned to lead CPD on unconscious bias and dealing with racist incidents with teachers. However, we had to postpone this due to a number of staff absences. The CPD is now planned for our April INSET day, along with planning for our cultural day, which pupils are very excited about! There are still many actions on our plan that are yet to be completed and some are still to begin. That said, we view this as a long-term objective of the school development plan.

To summarise what we have learnt to date is difficult because we have learnt so much. Here are the most influential learnings:

- We all have bias and privilege that we must recognise and own.
- Safe spaces to discuss race equity are essential.
- We need to make the effort to go outside our comfort zone and try to understand an alternate perspective.
- We should have confidence to use appropriate language and trust from others when the language may not be quite right.
- Picture books are so influential and accessible for primary-aged children.
- We need to listen to the children.
- We should collaborate with other schools and learn from their experiences.

We recognise there are many challenges involved in trying to achieve race equity in school. Here are those most notable for us:

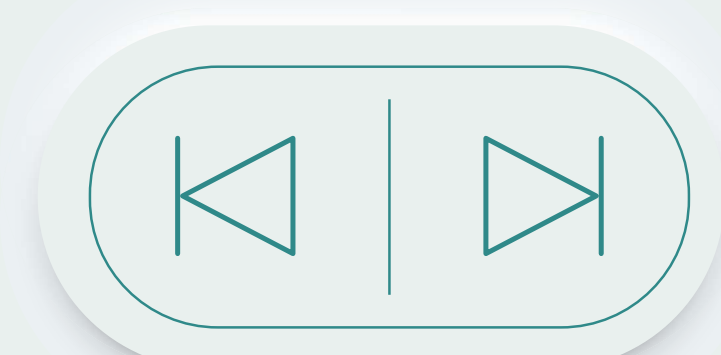
- engaging parents in a meaningful way
- developing the expertise to share our learning with staff
- getting the message to all members of staff
- maintaining the hope, resilience and courage to *face the shake-up*
- coordinating curriculum and culture shifts that will be seismic but need to start small
- recruiting people from diverse experiences and backgrounds

*Steve Emmett and Tracy Gaiteri*

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