

Chapter 8 EDUCATION

Themes in this chapter

- Racism and equality in schools
- Private schools – a note
- Curriculum as a driver for future good race relations
- Parental feedback on school and curriculum
- Minority Ethnic learning support services
 - Parental involvement
 - Support for adults
 - Support for children
- Racism and equality in Further and Higher Education

This chapter looks at how racism affects children and adults in the education sector, and also considers some of the things that need to be taken into account, in the curriculum and through good school management practice, to tackle and prevent racism. It also considers other ways in which education services can address some Black and Minority Ethnic support needs and reduce isolation.

Racism and equality in schools

The largest topic of concern in the participant feed-back about education was related to experience of racist bullying at school and poor school preparedness to tackle racism and cope with diversity.

The issue of school bullying is a huge arena of concern. The effects are known to be gravely serious for many victims, and often hidden. Bullying is manifested in many forms and selects themes through which it is perpetrated and by which a victim can be isolated and made vulnerable. The fact that racist bullying is one form amongst many, or that a ‘general’ bully may pick on all sorts of victims, does not nullify the seriousness of racist bullying or the importance of paying specific attention to its compounding effect on the isolation of Black and Minority Ethnic children. In chapter 5 we looked at the multiple layers of isolation affecting many Black and Minority Ethnic people. Multiple isolation affects children too. The combination of this with experience of racist bullying in school – a setting from which there is no easy escape – can provide a cocktail of misery for victims. As described in the introduction to this book, it’s

important that individual incidents are also examined in the light of the victim's vulnerability. The impact of incidents should be monitored in terms not only of how an incident is experienced in itself, but in terms of its effect on a victim's outlook on relationships, future, and the setting in which it occurred. This background information can only be obtained where schools have already developed staff's ability to understand and examine the issues and where they have gained the trust of their Black and Minority Ethnic children and parents in the school's commitment to addressing race equality and sensitive resolution of incidents of racist bullying.

The participants' provided a number of insights into the factors that can impede school action on racism and parental reporting of incidents, including :

- Lack of expertise in appraising incidents and the vulnerability profiles of victims.
- Lack of early intervention giving rise to behaviour obscuring the original problem of racism.
- Instances of failure to track the cause of such incidents and/or of poor Black and Minority Ethnic pupil behaviour to racist bullying or to vulnerability either inside or outside the school.
- Reluctance to identify bullying as racist when it has been couched in subtle terms. (Also see chapters 6 and 7.)
- Lack of training and planning about supporting Black and Minority Ethnic Pupils, promotion of diversity, and cultural sensitivity.
- Reliance upon victims to report incidents and the effects themselves, as opposed to school observation.
- Poor school response to reporting of problems.
- Loss of faith in a school's commitment to race equality, as a result of racist bullying.
- Parents' own poor experience of school-life (as children themselves or as parents).
- Parental concern about being seen to make a fuss and 'sticking out'.
- Parental and staff indecision over whether incidents are serious or not.
- Fear that school intervention will involve antagonists' parents and escalate the problem.
- The hope that bullying will go away.

A few recommendations from experience were also offered by participants as good practice including:

- One to one relationship-building between ring-leaders and victims facilitated by skilled teachers.
- Clear positions on racism and diversity taken by schools and made understood by all pupils [and parents].
- Confidence building work with new pupils [and parents], explaining how they will be valued and supported.

A number of participants, both parents and children, illustrated their sense of the presence of racism within their schools, with descriptions of incidents of bullying:

- *At primary school, me, a girl from Slough and a White girl from Scotland were all picked on because we were different and we planned to run away.*
- *Being called nigger at school. People don't call me nigger now because I'm older than them and taller. But one friend [recently] called me names when we fell out.*
- *My daughter has experienced one or two problems "poo face go back to where you came from". She looks more Italian than dark. The main bullying problems come from a group of kids aged 6 & 7 and came from boy who was a general bully and has a disturbed background - adopted. My daughter was shocked - she never knew she was 'abnormal'.*
- *We thought about coming to Devon earlier when my daughter was still at primary school. We thought about a school in Sidmouth when she was 10 and she tried it for 1 day but didn't go because the kids called her racist names. So we stayed in Cambridge.*
- *There were three main incidents at school. In the first year a girl from London stood on the desk in class and proposed that the school kids should get a collective together to send me back to London. I ran at her and let go at her. The teacher split us up but nothing was done about it. Harassment by this girl at the school gate continued for 2 months. She never got into trouble with the teachers. But she realised she wasn't getting anywhere because people were standing up for me. The second incident, 2 blokes and 10 girls in the toilets at school were smoking. The dinner lady came in and told me off for 'swinging on the door like a monkey' but didn't say anything to my friend who was*

doing the same. I was sent to the headmaster and I tried to say I was always singled out for being told off and he did nothing but gave me a detention. The third incident was when I was 14 and had my hair plaited for the first time with coloured beads. The headmaster said 'what do you think you're doing walking around like a bloody Christmas tree' and I got sent home to take them out. My Mum went to school to say it's part of my religion (which it wasn't) and they have to stay in. The head accepted. It was the first time I'd had plaits because my [adoptive] parents never used to know what to do about my hair, so it had always been cut short.

☞ *I asked our relatives' kids how college is like regarding racism. They said OK apart from the Head teacher who was sacked because of racism three years ago.*

We also heard of instances in which the absence of early positive intervention in racist bullying had the consequence of drawing victims into the aggression in frustrated retaliation. These cases highlighted the risk that as a result, the racist nature and implications of the source of the aggression – the racist bullying - becomes obscured, especially if witnesses or authorities only become involved at the point of retaliation. In this way, without early intervention the experience of racism remains unresolved and its victims can be left unsupported and resentful.

Two cases illustrate how incidents can escalate:

☞ *There was one incident at school involving friends of the family - one of whom hit my son with another boy and said they'd cut him to see if he had brown blood. I told him to defend his corner and that his blood is the same as anyone else's and to hit back if necessary. Then they were playing at our house and they hit my son and he hit one of them back with a shovel.*

An adopted participant told us:

☞ *There was a 4th incident at school with a girl who called me names like 'fucking nigger' on the school stairs. She had had a kid at the age of 14 and had had it adopted. I said 'at least I haven't had a kid etc..' and it caused a fight. The teacher came out and the girl started crying and told on me. The Head made me apologize to the girl and refused to make her apologize to me.*

A dual heritage child recounted concern about an incident involving another child:

☞ *Yesterday a boy got bullied because his parents live in Germany and he gets called Nazi and he gets very upset and he exploded yesterday and started fighting everyone. He normally just takes it quietly but this time he exploded with violence. He stood on the throat of one of the boys who tried to get involved to stop the fighting who stopped breathing and they had to call an ambulance. The teachers came in and asked what had happened and the German boy grabbed a hockey stick and hit a teacher - he was going mad. The teachers tried to restrain him. He escaped and ran away but they caught up with him. He gave one a nosebleed. I hope he won't get suspended. One teacher has been trained to deal with bullying. They've been asking other pupils what happened.*

Reported within the study were cases in which young-people's behavioural problems had not been appraised in the light of their vulnerability and isolation in the family and community setting. In these situations the schools had not taken the lead in making sure that these problems were fully understood and supported, at least at school. In one complex case a child was excluded from school. We heard of several cases in which behavioural issues manifesting from problematic trans-racial adoptions had arisen. We also heard of cases in which abuse experienced by the family in the community was impacting on children's school life and in which adult pressure was being put upon youngsters, including Minority Ethnic children, to get involved in perpetration of campaigns of racial harassment.

The expertise needed to identify race related aspects of cases is also required in the cases that don't involve racist language or which involve levels of behaviour that aren't marked out as serious enough to be considered 'incidents'. This presents a problem for both parents and school staff in assessing how positive school life is for their children, and to understand where children's exploration of issues of ethnicity and identity stops and where bullying starts:


A parent told us

☞ *My kids won't say what their experience of life is like. They're making and breaking friends all the time as usual. I ask if they're getting bullied. The little one is only 7. But they're both very happy at school. The little one said 'someone called me Brownie - why?'*


and a Minority Ethnic learning assistant noted:

☞ *There are forms in schools to fill in if you feel there is racial abuse and the teachers are aware. I am aware of a little bit of abuse e.g. girls asking boy Sikhs why they have long hair, but they're not racists.*

In addition to the difficulty in assessing the continuum between inquisitive ignorance and victimisation, a parent also had difficulty in knowing when to intervene and make a point with a school:


 *My son had a problem at school - a state school where he was from 4 to 7 yrs old. The class size of infant school had been 16. At primary school they have 32 students - it was a shock. At break time he was circled by kids chanting ' funny Chinese'. I didn't do much because I felt it was because he had just changed school. But it happened 3 times a day by December and my son was crying and was being bullied with chanting, teasing, and looking through his work.*

For many parents, diffidence about approaching the school with their concerns, related to anxiety about being seen as difficult or 'sticking out' themselves. English as an Additional Language Advisory Teachers employed by Devon LEA confirmed the low profile of the Black and Minority Ethnic parents of their pupils at school, describing the difficulty of making contact with parents because they rarely attended Parents' Meetings or picked their children up at the School Gates. One parent described her reason for keeping a low profile around school:

 *I have felt very uncomfortable picking my children up because of reactions to my ethnicity.*

A parent of Traveller origins even described how a campaign of harassment had involved a member of school staff who took the opportunity of antagonising her at the school gates. Another parent described how a campaign of bullying against her son stopped when her White husband was made redundant and started to take their son to school.

The lack of contact between Black and Minority Ethnic parents and schools can lead to a parent-school failure to deal with racist bullying. One parent described the delay in dealing effectively with a bullying problem that was culminating in mental health impact on the child. The delay began with the parent's assumption that any problem would be automatically observed, appraised and dealt with at the school, and because the school failed to take the problem seriously enough and communicate effectively with the parents:

 *My son has been racially attacked at school. I noticed he was suffering depression - the problem had not been picked up properly in the parent/school contact book..... at first we were not keen to talk to the school - we hoped the teachers would resolve it. Then I consulted the school and governing board and logged a complaint. The school dealt with it. After the first complaint we hoped it would go away -*

we thought that if it wasn't deliberate bullying it would pass. By the third complaint we had seen that the effects on our child were serious. The seriousness of the problem had not been picked up in the parent/teacher contact book. We spoke to the teacher and got our son to speak to the teacher too to make the teacher aware. The teacher said our son hadn't opened up. They called in the parents of the antagonists..... I have also stopped taking my son swimming because of harassment from the boys from school.....

This example illustrates the problem of the expectation by either parents or school staff, that a victimised child should take on the responsibility of assessing, reporting, and opening up about their experience.

Another factor in parental diffidence in getting schools involved is the concern that the school might bring in the parents of the antagonist, often perceived by the victim's parents as being the source of the prejudice. Parents' worries included the fear that the school might not be able to handle the antagonists' parents, and that their involvement might lead to an escalation of the problem for the child in the school and for the whole family outside of school.

☛ *At first school didn't intervene. The school wanted to bring in the parents but I felt that the kids should sort it out and find out who were friends and not and to be left to get on with it without the parents exerting their bad influence.*

☛ *I find it hardest when the kids are targeted with anti-Semitism. [My youngest daughter has] had most of the racism.....my daughter had anti-Semitism because the kids got it from their parents (one of the antagonists said so). The parents told the school that they didn't want Judaism covered in the curriculum. It feels really unsafe..... and we're involved in the school so everyone knows we're Jewish. My daughter is very unnerved by the racist bullying. She says her friends won't come to the house because of the food and she wants to be 'normal'. She feels socially isolated..... I spoke to the head who wanted to drag in the parents but I felt it would make things worse...*

The lack of confidence on the part of parents that schools would be competent in dealing with racism and multi-culturalism was also a matter of concern for parents, who described instances in which their children had been treated poorly or insensitively:

- ☞ *[My daughter] doesn't really see herself as mixed-race. She's very clued up, popular, mature and on the School Council. However, she had an uncomfortable experience when hauled up at school assembly when an African person was visiting the School. He asked her where her father came from and she didn't know – she was very embarrassed*
- ☞ *All three [of my children] identify strongly as being Jewish. The youngest is the most up front Jew of the three. But she has also had more of our community history. ...[..she's had most of the racism].....the staff dismiss it saying 'well it didn't happen to your two other kids' so they blame her for it*
- ☞ *My 3 kids had problems at 2 schools..... The first had difficulties because at 8 years old he was told he was educationally subnormal because of a lack of English because of being taught Italian at home! But in fact he had no problem with Italian but was dyslexic in English. Consequently he didn't get taught Maths. Now he's a very successful government lawyer. Had we not been able to stand up for him the issue would have been judged as down to an Italian problem.*
- ☞ *[My son] then went to the nearby grammar school. It was very high cache and he didn't fit in and didn't fulfill his academic potential. He was great at basket ball and won a national hotspot competition but the school never honoured his success. The school didn't know how to handle his dynamism. They had no strategies in place for kids of ethnic backgrounds. My niece also went there and had the same problems.*

Lack of competence through lack of practice in dealing with race equality may perhaps be argued to arise because of the small Black and Minority Ethnic population size. However, the low numbers of Black and Minority Ethnic children in any one school is all the more reason to ensure that isolated pupils are supported not only reactively but proactively. Moreover, in spite of the relatively small size of the Black and Minority Ethnic pupil population, there is in fact no Academic Council in Devon which does not include Black and Minority Ethnic pupils. 67% of Devon schools do have Black and Minority Ethnic pupils and the increase in population between the 1991 and 2001 was 100%. (See chapter 3 for more demographic and schools data).

Lack of experience in dealing with incidents may also have more to do with reluctance of parents and children to report incidents to schools and the

reluctance of schools to encourage it. We've already seen some of the reasons why parents are diffident about coming forward. Reporting can also be impeded by the lack of school planning on race equality or the failure to communicate positive messages about how diversity is valued in school, how the school is ready and able to deal with racism sensitively and effectively, and that children and parents will be supported.

A Minority Ethnic parent told us:

I'm a school Governor. The school is good at dealing with incidents but isn't clear in general about saying that incidents will not be tolerated - it's reactive rather than proactive. There's lots of under-reporting by kids because they hear abuse but don't always know who's said it and are afraid to be seen as 'crying wolf' too many times. I nearly resigned because the school was too frightened about having a race equality policy (which it has to have under the Race Relations Amendment Act). Staff were worried about making an issue bigger by making a fuss over it. But this is a white perspective, not a Black perspective. The school needs to know that anyone, staff or pupil who sees abuse must report it. A cleaning staff member didn't report that he was being racially abused because he didn't know how fairly he'd be treated if he complained.

Racist incident reporting in schools - schools don't know what to do about it - they hush it up so that they don't get labelled as racist schools.

The ultimate expression of poor school-parent liaison in dealing with incidents and in poor school management of incidents or promotion of diversity, is that some parents resort to finding other schools for their children. Several parents described the hope that in city, private and other schools, with other Black and Minority Ethnic Children their children would at least find some peer support.

[My son] was bullied at primary school because he was coloured and beautiful. He was the only coloured kid at school. He did make 3 or 4 lasting friends but the bullying lasted 2 years. The prejudice in the kids comes from the parents. Then he moved to another local primary school and there were 2 other Black kids there- hence the decision to move him. They have stuck together like glue.

We thought about changing schools and the school said they'd keep an eye on my son. I don't want them to fuss about it because I prefer to

think positively. We looked at a local private school and my son will start there in April There are lots of kids of different nationalities there and the class sizes are smaller - so it's a better environment. At his old school the teachers shout all day. At the new school everyone is polite. The problem in state schools is also due to the social issues at home - some parents are not so conscientious. I would have felt happier if the old school had proposed a positive plan of action.

By contrast, problems can be ameliorated with effective action. Some participants described incidents indicating the types of approaches that they felt were good practice:

Mum:

☛ *The school checked that [my son] was OK at breaks and that he came to school. Then the kids were taken in 1 by 1 at the school without the parents, to talk to the kids about the situation. Since then things have improved. Even in one week there was a big difference. After the boys apologised to [my son], he ended up comforting them - a role reversal!*

Son:


☛ *My advice to other Black kids is first tell your teacher. Don't worry if the bullies say "don't tell anyone because I'll beat you up" - you can say "if you do you're in worse trouble". Get in a room with the teachers and the kids and ask them why they're calling you names and try to get on with them. Try and get one of the group to see you're OK and they'll tell the rest of the gang or find the ringleaders and talk.*

☛ *My son went to a private primary school. He got abuse from the kids. It was solved by the Headmaster doing an assembly on racism and zero tolerance. It worked well. It wouldn't work in a secondary school though.*

☛ *The headmaster talked to me before I started school and it gave me a good feeling.*

☛ *I would like teachers to warn bullies of the serious consequences. If I was bullied I would tell a teacher. But I don't really know what I would do as I haven't thought about it. We have a PHSE lesson that looks at peer pressure and bullying and says we should tell a teacher, nurse or counsellor confidentially. I think bullies who say things need to be told what the effect is by the teachers so they know to stop.*

One participant had questions about how race equality in Devon schools would impact on her life once she started a family:

 *I would be reassured or not by the school or playgroup's reaction to me myself. I would get people's opinions and talk about the issues and see how they would respond and what's in place to deal with any eventuality. I would talk to the Head and ask 'what would happen if...' and they would need more than just something on paper. I'd need to see how people are and if they will care - not just the standard 'we have a policy and we'll follow it'. I would hope that the school wouldn't address it with the kids by a talk at assembly. I hope they would only deal with it with other kids if an incident occurred.*

Private schools – a note

We have noted that private schools may be an option of choice for those who can afford it, influenced by the higher number of Minority Ethnic pupils that attend them and the peer-support-opportunity that offers. One of the reasons why private school Minority Ethnic populations are higher is because they attract overseas and international families. We note that more research could be done into issues affecting this section of the Black and Minority Ethnic population, partly because

- a) of the presence of Black and Minority Ethnic young people in an area having an effect upon the extent to which diversity is appreciated as visible in an area
- b) of the likelihood that, if these pupils' experience is good, they will maintain an input in the area as tourists or as professionals,
- c) as boarders, overseas children experience isolation from family and home culture, in addition to any other isolating factors
- d) racism can affect all schools, including private schools
- e) Devon has a number of private schools contributing to the prestige, employment and facilities of their locale. The investment that Black and Minority Ethnic parents and alumni contribute to these schools is by extension an asset to the local economy and infrastructure.



Race and equality in the curriculum

Curriculum as a driver for future good race relations

Twenty nine participants put forward suggestions about the ways in which race equality and cultural diversity could be promoted in Devon through schools. These focussed around the belief that education could start children off with positive attitudes, bringing about good race relations in

future generations. See chapter 12 for the detail of these recommendations under ‘awareness-raising in schools’.

Two of the participants’ feedback helps to illustrate the importance attached to the need for race equality initiatives in the curriculum:

-  *Kids miss out here all the time because they're all white Christian and consequently they lose out and are very sheltered in education because diversity is not around them. Most kids haven't seen black children. As a teacher I try to include multi-cultural links from the point of view of multi-ethnic Britain. It's difficult to bring multi-culture into education because of lack of resources and time and money. I'd like to have an exchange - but where is the nearest multi cultural school - would just like the kids to have intercultural play. There could be intercultural visits - a proper school-to-school link, not just a one-off session. This would alleviate ignorance and racism in parents and in the children's heads. Kids here never use racist language but I suspect that due to lack of exposure parents may be racist due to ignorance. Lots of kids have never even been to the beach or to restaurants or eaten other sorts of foods.*
-  *The school is good but C of E. All schools should have many topics of discussion about other religions and cultures, otherwise children will get the shock of their lives when they eventually leave Devon!*

One of the means which participants’ took part in the research was workshops. In these sessions, groups of participants had the opportunity to debate what they saw as the key inhibitor of good race relations in Devon and to formulate a strategy for addressing it. The process involved drawing up a ‘problem tree’ to describe the inhibitor, its causes and effects, and then to transform the problem analysis into a solution, its inputs and outcomes. In one workshop racial abuse in schools and from the public were seen as a single concept, and a combined response from schools, the media, employment strategies, individuals’ own efforts and religious support were seen as the solution. Please refer to the web-based Appendix to this chapter (www.DevonREC.org) to look at the problem and solution analyses associated with Education, and to note the part of schools in them.


Parental feedback on school and curriculum

One group of participants focussed on education and the curriculum itself as their prime concern in their ‘Objective Oriented Planning’, (as the technique is called – the method is described in the web-based to chapter 11 www.DevonREC.org). Their strategy shown in their analysis tree in the

web-based Appendix to this chapter (www.DevonREC.org), involves the key inputs of:

- Recruitment and selection of teachers to include race equality competencies
- Curriculum support materials designed for and used by teachers
- INSET training for teachers on use of curriculum materials and in dealing with race equality in the classroom
- Mainstreaming of race equality throughout the curriculum
- A whole-school approach to planning the promotion of race equality

The participants had clear ideas about education-related issues and were keen to express their views with the researcher. However, we have already seen in this chapter that there are a number of factors causing parental diffidence in coming forward to raise issues of concern with schools. This also applies to raising issues and making suggestions about how they can be addressed in the curriculum. One Minority Ethnic parent's comments illustrated this diffidence:

 *My son keeps coming home talking about Jesus all the time which is a bit worrying. I don't want him to be sucked into church life. My kids say they're not being taught about other religions - they did cover Divali, but the kids didn't come back talking about it so I don't think they covered it in much detail. I haven't spoken to the school because I don't think I can approach them because I don't want to upset them - I don't have a sense of that kind of authority especially because I'm an outsider from London. Maybe I'll say something this year. I don't think I can raise it at a parents' meeting because they're more about teachers telling you how the kids have been doing.*

Minority Ethnic learning support services

Parental involvement in children's learning

Given the importance that the participants have attached to the promotion of race equality in society through schools, the role of good parent-school liaison is a key factor in success for all the reasons outlined above. To build relationships the confidence and trust of parents needs to be proactively established as soon as a child joins a school, and built upon with good communication. Encouraged by the learning from this research, it is hoped that a home-school liaison post will be established under the

Devon Children's Fund in partnership with the Devon Local Education Authority's English as an Additional Language Service. The strategic objective of this post would be to enable Black and Minority Ethnic children, young people and families to be supported in improving educational achievement and social inclusion.

Based on this research, DEREK has also advocated the further support of Black and Minority Ethnic children and parents through the joint working of the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service in schools and the Adult and Community Learning Service, who have responsibility for Black and Minority Ethnic child and adult learning respectively. These services both suffer the frustration of limited resources for their work on Black and Minority education. However, with the mutual means of extending each other's outreach to children and parents and as a key means of supporting some of the most isolated of the Black and Minority Ethnic population, their work with families and individuals deserves priority support. Projects designed to jointly meet parents and children's English as an Additional Language needs are also an important vehicle for extending the impact of the EAL and ACL services.


Learning support for children

The Census demographics outlined in chapter 3 show that 50% of the Black and Minority Ethnic population in Devon have migrated from overseas to the UK. This highlights the importance of the English as an Additional Language service provided in schools, through Devon County Council, for children of families migrating from overseas. The mission of the service is to provide a co-ordinated, quality service which supports schools and enables mainstream class/subject teachers and teaching assistants to identify and respond to the needs of minority ethnic pupils and those for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). As well as supporting EAL pupils, the service also has a role of addressing school factors affecting the ability of Black and Minority Ethnic pupils to take full advantage of school life, and also looks at the educational best interests of bi-lingual pupils.

In this global village that is the world, language skills are an important asset, worth fostering for the interests of the future economy. Language is also one of the vehicles of culture and, by extension, valuing diversity means valuing language. Multi-culture and multilingual abilities are also an obvious factor in family cohesion for dual heritage families, who are becoming an increasingly important part of the local Minority Ethnic

demography (30% of the Black and Minority Ethnic population in Devon – excluding Irish and European families).

One participant described how the valuing of diversity through language was a feature of education in her home country that she would like to see extended in the UK:

 *Life in Devon would be better if the children could have the option to have their native language taught at school for a minimum of 2 hours a week. We have that option in Sweden, so why not here? It makes it so much easier for the kids to grow up bi-lingual.*

The EAL Service in schools is making the most of limited funding to find targeted and innovative ways to address the support needs of Black and Minority Ethnic pupils. It is worth noting here some of the research and development work that the service is undertaking, taken from a recent report:

Initiatives to support isolated bilingual learners and promote opportunities for networking	
•	Development of dual language web pages, initially Chinese.
•	Development of dual language multimedia resources for use by children/teachers.
•	Development of links with statistical neighbours to identify successful strategies for raising achievement of isolated learners. Project with Gloucester to link Chinese speaking children using ICT and video conferencing. The target group is gifted and talented EAL learners. Exchange activities in each school include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Year 3 pupils making a school video - Developing multimedia resources - Video conferencing
•	Liaison with other agencies to support pupils e.g. Connexions, the Children’s Fund.
•	Development of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) publication on Islam, including section on supporting Muslim children in Devon schools. Compiled in collaboration with SACRE/ Devon Curriculum Services and the Islamic Centre, Exeter.
•	Proposed publication, 'Stories from the Quran' - for use with Key Stage One & Two pupils/teachers.
•	Chinese community project undertaken in Exeter with support from a Learning and Skills Council grant. It is hoped that this activity will be developed into a family literacy project with partners e.g. Islamic

	Centre, Exeter.
•	Participation in a national project to understand the lives and concerns of bi-lingual children who participate in language brokering.
Whole school approach to develop home/school liaison and inclusion	
•	Family literacy project with Minority Ethnic families, 'Keeping up with the children' in partnership with Adult Basic Skills Agency. Piloted at Stoke Hill First and extended to Stoke Hill Middle school. Proposed development to include parents from other schools in liaison with the University of Exeter.
•	<p>Small scale Collaborative Action Research project at an Exeter school undertaken by Head of Service and the University of Exeter, 'Promoting Learning in a multi-ethnic school'.</p> <p>This project focused on aspects of the educational experience for a group of year 1 children. The findings provided a number of useful and interesting insights. In general the findings revealed that the parents and children interviewed were happy with most of the school experience. In addition, parents and children seemed pleased that the school was interested in seeking their opinions.</p> <p>A number of themes emerged from analysis of the data. These centred on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assumptions about appropriate educational practice - identity and voice - home-school liaison - parents/children's suggestions for improving the educational experience of children with EAL in the school
•	<p>Development of small scale, collaborative research project: 'Effective teaching and learning across the curriculum, to focus on the improvement of written work of Minority Ethnic /EAL pupils in History, Religious Education and Science at Key Stage 2'.</p> <p>Good practice will be highlighted and areas for improvement identified. This collaborative project involves 3 EAL service Advisory Teachers, Devon Advisors in History, RE and Science, English Consultants and the University of Exeter. To date a pilot project has been undertaken at KS3. Data is currently being analysed. Suggested support strategies will be disseminated to all Devon schools.</p>
•	<p>The Head of Service, EAL is undertaking qualitative research supported by Devon LEA and the University of Exeter concerning 'The experiences of isolated bilingual learners in Devon schools'.</p> <p>Initial findings have highlighted a number of themes, some positive</p>

e.g. inclusion of pupils, peer support. However, others are a cause for concern e.g.:

➤ The research highlights that there appears to be an underlying tendency to fit bilingual children into the 'existing norm' of the dominant school culture. This may be a subtle, possibly subconscious attitude by teachers. Nonetheless, it promotes institutional relations of power in which discrimination may occur against pupils whose cultural, economic and or linguistic background are not the same as the dominant group.

➤ In addition, whilst racism in an overt manner may not be evident at school, negative peer attitudes may be experienced due to "differences" portrayed by bilingual children. At one end of the continuum there are clear racist comments, but at the other end there are more subtle remarks or actions, such as 'being laughed at'.

We wonder how far some of these more subtle actions are in fact being seen as part of school life, experienced by all children: Therefore perhaps they are being condoned by teachers in Devon.

➤ Bilingual children, especially EAL children in predominantly all white Devon schools may conform in order to be accepted within a school setting. This raises several questions which need to be considered at school level:

- How far must pupils relinquish their 'natal' identity... in order to acquire/negotiate a more appropriate identity and be accepted?

- How far is the process of identity shift likely to lead to conflicts for a child

- How can teachers make this process easy and comfortable for pupils?

- How can teachers ensure that all children have opportunities to reflect their own identities and be valued as individuals? This approach acknowledges the need for the individual needs of all pupils to be identified and supported.

The EAL schools service's own research and development is clearly an important asset in Devon, and the findings described in this book make a strong case for further funding of the service's work to ensure that its initiatives can have impact across the whole of Devon. Many of the questions that the EAL research raises confirm that training for schools on the promotion of diversity and on dealing with racist incidents and culture is an important vehicle for helping staff to recognize, raise and develop strategies for addressing these questions with pupils and families. The 'whole person' approach that this Handbook advocates as the basis for supporting Black and Minority Ethnic people also addresses some of the

questions raised, chapters 4 & 6 also provide useful background on the way that our participants felt about ethnicity, identity and racism.

Learning support for adults

Chapter 5 examined factors affecting isolation and belonging among rural Black and Minority Ethnic people. The participant data demonstrates that, for the majority of those participants whose English was described as ‘poor’ the effect was social exclusion from circles of friendship, participation in community life and in organised activities. 68% of the participants had leisure interests spanning a great range of outdoor and indoor leisure interests. But only 35% described being members of organisations and only 41% described taking part in community life. Membership of organisations and participation in community life, where it existed, often coincided with leisure interest.

This data indicates that there is wide opportunity for attracting Black and Minority Ethnic people to adult education and leisure activities organised through local colleges. However, the participants described a number of factors that prevent them from taking part in activities, including:

- Lack of time.
- Negative experiences of reception in the community, including racism.
- Shyness and fear of cultural and linguistic problems.

For those people whose English was described as ‘poor’, access to information about educational and leisure activities would also be a factor, as well as the problem of understanding and being understood.

The demographic data also indicates that with 50% of the Black and Minority Ethnic population in Devon migrating from outside the UK English language learning support is potentially a key need for many. Although we found that the majority of our participants, whilst mostly born overseas and speaking English as an Additional Language, spoke English well, many professionals within this group needed access to education for skills recognition and advancement through qualifications. And although the research indicated that the proportion of the Black and Minority Ethnic population with poor English skills is small, it noted that language support is critical for this group.

Adult English as Additional Language classes are provided and managed through a complex funding system, and delivered through FE and Community Colleges and learning centres. These classes are invaluable in supporting their students to take part in work and society. However, some

providers described difficulty in providing EAL tutors for adults in remote areas, where Adult Basis Skills classes might be used instead as a fall-back resource, in which EAL adult learners would learn with White British literacy students whose education needs are different. Alternatively some EAL adult learners have to travel prohibitive distances to access EAL classes. Providers also described the lengths which are sometimes gone to in order to make potential learners aware of the service, for example visiting newly opened restaurants and by word of mouth, when they had the time. They were also aware of less accessible potential learners working in low pay industries, like restaurants and factories.

Chapter 7 describes how the research found that 18.5% of the participants were not using work-related skills in employment. Whilst half of these spoke English fluently or as their first language, the other half had English skills described as 'good' with a fraction having a poor command of English. The research raises a number of points about the influence of English as an Additional Language in accessing the jobs market. Firstly it suggests that people who have 'good' conversational abilities still need help with language skills to the point that they can sell themselves and operate in professional and skilled work with confidence. For some this will involve:

- the development of vocabulary specific to a particular work environment
- help with translating CVs and qualification papers into forms and/or language that succeed in demonstrating skills transferability to the UK market
- practice in the UK process and culture of job application writing
- practice in interviewing for jobs.
- driving

The research also found that a number of the participants were dependent on public transport, usually because they had never learnt to drive, or had not passed a UK test and struggled with UK driver examination requirements. Chapter 1 refers to the importance of the ability to drive in rural Devon, not only to access services but also for employment, and described the difficulties involved in passing a UK driving test. Adult EAL classes could be an opportunity to provide driving-focussed vocabulary and aural practice, providing confidence and access to a key skill that can help in overcoming isolation.

Providers of the EAL Service for adults also described the difficulties that many of their students face in dealing with everyday welfare and

bureaucratic systems. They described how in addition to teaching, they become frequently drawn beyond their remit and expertise into providing an informal welfare support service to students, helping with form filling and advocacy, and have nowhere to refer on the burden. The Racial Equality Council aims to address this problem by seeking funding to employ community development workers who would facilitate and support networks of rural Black and Minority Ethnic people, providing referral links to specialist services, and helping service providers to be more responsive to the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic clients. The community workers would link with EAL services in schools and adult settings to provide access to network support. The networks would also be a means through which potential EAL adult learners could be informed of the EAL service.

Adult EAL services themselves could however address some welfare problems by ensuring that the curriculum is welfare-oriented in design. By orienting language support towards students' employment (current and aspired), social, family and welfare concerns, the impact of language support on student's lives can be magnified. Whilst this does infer 'tailoring' of curricula to individual student needs, the difficulty of this could be reduced by having menus of supported learning sets, pitched at different skill levels, from which students could choose. Such materials and menus would also have to deal with the challenge of merging with the nationally prescribed EAL strand of the Adult Basic Skills curriculum.

Design of such learning sets should ideally involve students, to identify the concerns they face in engaging in English speaking life and how these would translate into curriculum support needs. However, much is already known about student needs through their tutors, and an information partnership between tutors who have been fulfilling welfare support roles and welfare agencies who construct the language and terminology and systems that adult EAL learners contend with could be a forum for identifying curriculum content and materials.

In the course of the research we also noted a number of other learning factors requiring responsive EAL provision for adult learners:

- Some students come from backgrounds where education has not been an empowering experience.
- Many are contending with emotional and work factors that leave them mentally exhausted in addition to the strain of thinking in another language (we noted several cases of chronic depression among participants).

- Some need help with motivation to see the point of improving their English and ultimately their life chances.
- Some people have poor literacy not only in English, but also in their first language.
- Other students already speak several languages and may be skilled in learning new ones.
- Some students are be constrained/inhibited in their ability to attend classes by working hours, by temporary residence in an area (many unskilled restaurant workers stay in one place for only up to 6 – 9 months, making little contact with local services), or by rural isolation and lack of transport.
- Many students do not have the time or mental energies to take on home-work study on top of classes, and make better progress instead in supported learning settings
- Some students have British partners who are unfamiliar with what it is like to speak another language, and would benefit if their partners could be trained by the EAL adult service as ‘learning assistants’ to support them at home and in class.
- Some learners need creche facilities for children.

To address these factors and the life-circumstance-oriented learning objectives of students does imply ‘student-centred’ curricula. It also requires attention to choice of settings, class times, child care, transport and the home learning environment. The ‘marketing’ of EAL services also involves addressing the perceptions and concerns that potential students have about engaging with the service.

To help tutors cope with the one- to-one components of student-centred curricula and tailored conversation practice, DEREK has advocated the use of volunteer schemes in partnership with local Volunteer Bureaux. To address rural and transport exclusion from services, courses with different language objectives could also be IT based, backed up with peripatetic tutorial support on an occasional basis, and supported by local volunteers who can sit with the student and follow the IT package instructions verbally. IT packages could be available for people to run on their own P.C.s or at libraries, schools, colleges and village/town IT centres. The advantage of an IT package is that it could be provided with instructions in a variety of languages (but would only be appropriate for first-language-reading-literate and IT literate students).

The research recognizes however, that the ability of the Service to address such recommendations however, is constrained by government prescriptions on curriculum, and therefore that whilst innovation in the voluntary sector to address language support is an option, higher level debate is needed about statutory sector curriculum.

The acclaimed Olive Tree project in Exeter, which began by providing welfare-oriented EAL support to women, demonstrates the value of providing an EAL service in a setting and manner tailored to specific learner groups, such as women, especially Muslim women. There is much to learn from this project for rural applications, including the importance of using learning venues which students feel are safe and familiar, and the benefits of grouping people who have aspects of identity in common. The Olive Tree project has also expanded to provide access for its members to other forms of welfare, leisure and health services.


Similarly, the Adult EAL service could also be used as the springboard for identifying students' other learning interests, advertising and providing introductions to other Adult and Community Learning services and working in partnership with these services to make sure that they are socially inclusive and accessible.

The Racial Equality Council has also advocated that the welfare support and sign-posting burdens upon Adult EAL staff could be minimized by providing tutors with a reference/sign-posting pack in various languages which they could use to advise students and provide to students to take home (especially if it is available in appropriate languages). Such a pack could have information that is relevant pan-Devon, and also district and town/parish specific information. It could also be made available from District Councils, GPs, churches etc, and from Community Development Workers, thereby helping to improve advertising of the EAL & ACL services too. We have also noted that Councils have information about foreign national households through Council Tax and Electoral Roll registration systems. This could be an opportunity in principle to distribute multi-lingual welcome packs. However, current data protection regulations require that personal information such as this should only be used for the purpose for which it has been stated and permission obtained from the data subject. Hence some means of complying with these regulations would need to be found to enable the address information arising from these registrations to be used to distribute welcome packs.

The use of a welcome pack by Adult EAL tutors could also be supported by having occasional forum meetings between the EAL tutors, their co-


ordinators and with the key support agencies (DEREC, CABx, Social Services, Victim Support, Benefits Agency etc.) who are sign-posted in the pack. Such Forum meetings could enable the tutors to identify further issues which need to be covered in the pack, and would enable the agencies to brief the tutors on the services which the pack describes. Amendments and new editions of the packs could also be distributed through such forum. The pack would be useful for EAL tutors of both adult and school students.

Issues of widening the participation in education opportunities were raised in particular regarding the needs of potential learners who do not even imagine that the opportunity of adult education could be open to them. Devon is home to many Black and Minority Ethnic people working in low pay industries, without access to the opportunity of moving into more financially secure or skilled work. From participants and service providers we heard how many of these people are servicing the local leisure (restaurants) and food industries (meat, vegetable and fruit factories and farms) but are unsure of their entitlement to education opportunities, and remain locked into low incomes. We heard from participants about the insecurity that this provides especially for restaurant workers:

 *The other Bengali staff at the restaurants didn't have a clue about outside studies. Most of the staff work for 6 - 9 months in an area then move on. Opportunities for Indian restaurant staff depend partly on the staff and their motivation - some are only here for a short time.*


Concern was raised about the needs of non-family workers in larger restaurants who are essentially a mobile population within the UK, and who consequently don't have access to the facilities that the settled population have and don't establish families. Issues were raised about their lack of engagement with services external to the business, their dependence on their English speaking bosses for contact with the world outside the restaurant, and their dependence on the job for housing. Concerns were also raised for these workers as a future generation of elderly people, with limited English and without family support. Access to English language support and skills training in a format that could engage with them through their place of work, yet without threatening the interest of employers, would clearly address some problems otherwise looming in the future.

An Asian restaurateur explained:

 *Most Indian restaurant staff work 6 - 9 months then move on, often for more comfort or pay or atmosphere or accommodation. After a few years most want their own business - so they need lots of experience.*

Moving is a way of getting promotion. People also move for better accommodation because there is mostly 2 or 3 people per room. Some bosses are tight and don't put on the central heating - so lots of people move on for central heating and hot water. New businesses have learnt from the past and now provide TV etc. and treat staff better. There are also bonuses. Staff eat in the kitchen restaurant. Staff move so often they can't make local friends. So they form friendships with other staff and follow each other to jobs. My staff don't speak English. Most businesses only have 1 or 2 waiters who speak good English. People who speak good English won't be kitchen assistants. I encourage staff to learn English. My cousin is the chef and goes to Exeter college once a week. I set up the course for him....

A Chinese participant also gave some insight into the situation of other Chinese restaurant workers:

 *There are many types of Chinese: (but Peking and Shanghai don't come to the UK). Malaysian, Hong Kong new territories (mostly takeaway people); China mainland (refugees). They have hard life and some arrive illegally. They keep very quiet. They have to pay lots to the gangs and send money back to China to help the family pay for their transport. They come because education is very poor in China and they think the UK is heaven and there is chance to have better life. But in practice life in the UK for them is very hard. The snake heads could be government officer in China and in UK snake heads could be English or Chinese. People in the restaurant might think I'm government and don't want anything in black and white. They're worried I'll tell things about them to other people. Chinese restaurant people usually work as a family. Their friends and family move around restaurants for more money. Family are kept on for longer periods. They also have accommodation for staff but it is very crowded. Some of the itinerant workers go to English classes. Lots don't want to go to English though. They hear about it by word of mouth. Most people are not religious. People are satisfied if they have a job - it's much better than China where there's so much unemployment. They have freedom here - you can even shout 'Tony Blair is rubbish'.*

A housing development worker working with the Chinese population in Manchester and Plymouth confirmed these issues and also described concerns for the future elderly generation of many people who currently run small family businesses and rely on their British born children for

communication with the world outside the restaurant. The worker described how the offspring in these families are now typically encouraged to pursue careers outside the restaurant trade, with the inevitable movement away from the family home and business, and breakdown in close knit family ties. The worker described how many of these ageing people are beginning to find the prospect of old age a challenge because of language isolation, and because life up until the point of retirement has been consumed by work to the exclusion of forming supportive links in the local community. The worker also described how older people are preferring to stay in the South of the UK, rather than rejoining larger communities in the North. A housing project in Plymouth has been established to meet some of these needs of retired Chinese elderly.

Hence language support and skills development is in principle an unmet need for many members of the restaurant community. In particular it raises issues for education initiatives for itinerant workers and the elderly, and preventative action to mitigate problems for future elderly. However, the nature of restaurant employee status and the self-containment among family businesses (many of whom do not even network between themselves because of business competition) pose challenges to outreach and inclusion. Experience elsewhere in the UK suggests that outreach success is improved with the support of co-lingual outreach and development workers, but that success of this can be impeded by the strength of feeling about privacy and culturally rooted fear of government and authority.

Racism and equality in Further and Higher Education (FE & HE)

Three areas of concern were flagged up by adult students participating in the research, and education providers:


- Difficulties faced by students recruited to FE and HE courses from overseas .
- Racism experienced by staff and students, from other students and from institutions of education.

Devon has a number of HE and FE courses attracting students from overseas to rural colleges. Education institutions have a number of motives in attracting overseas students, among them some relating to the international interests a college has in its field of expertise, and some relating to the institutions' own economic interests. Most institutions have international officers looking after the interests of overseas students. However, we heard from some staff about the difficulty they had in interesting students in social activities they organised. At the same time,

we heard from many students about feelings of loneliness, culture shock and feelings of alienation from the mainstream student culture.

Several students described the financial commitment they had made to covering the cost of study in the UK and their surprise at the cost of living on top of that. They also described other factors that added to their difficulty of coping with study in a foreign culture and language, including:

- degrees of fear and concern about the level of drunken behaviour among British students
- having to 'explain who they are' to other students in response to reactions to their ethnicity
- the burden of operating in another language not only for study but for all aspects of everyday life
- finding their way around everyday services and transport
- lack of familiar cultural leisure activity
- difficulty in making friends
- loneliness away from friends and family (the usual sources of support) in their home country
- prohibitive costs involved in returning home for holidays
- overall pressure of study


 *Bad things about living here include high pressure of study. Things that would improve life at the college would include language support and more information of the life in Devon.*

In one workshop with students, the group selected loneliness as their main concern and the impact it had on their studies. For them, help with maintaining contact with family, especially those students with limited financial means, and provision of opportunities to make friends and reduce loneliness during vacations were unmet needs.


The challenge of study is an onerous one for foreign students for all the above reasons. Some students indicated that life was made easier if they lived with supportive host families rather than on campus. However a student support officer at one college described the difficulty the college experienced in finding enough hosts.

The varied language ability of some students was also clearly an important factor in the level of isolation and the burden of study they experienced. A number of students selected translated questionnaires (as opposed to English ones) although they responded in written English, and others struggled with conversation in workshops.

Given that any level of English speaking skill other than fluency will put a strain on any student, it follows that language support must be a key part of the education package in recruitment from overseas. Similarly, just as thinking in English creates tiredness inhibitors to study (as well as varied degrees of difficulty in understanding) other mental welfare factors also have a major impact on ability to study and need support.

 *Most of the students here are from farms and not used to foreign people and don't make friends with us - I try to make friends but they don't respond. This is the main problem here.*

Isolation, vulnerability and depression are also consequences of the experience of racial prejudice, to which overseas students are especially vulnerable. Moreover, overseas students whose English may not stretch to colloquial interpretation and who feel themselves outsiders, are less likely to report experiences of prejudice, general hostility and unwelcome reactions from other students. We heard of student experience of prejudice ranging from rude and rowdy behaviour, to the feeling that British students were not interested in friendship with foreign students, to the extreme of vicious campaigns of overt racist intimidation. One Minority Ethnic staff member described how one case had been effectively dealt with by the student Union, but also described how Black and Minority Ethnic tutors had felt unable to make much difference to another case of serious student racism and the institutional frustrations it threw up for them:


 *This is the first time [i.e. as a result of the research] that my[BME] colleague and I have talked about race matters – whether our own experiences or those of our students. The Tutor system prevents us from dealing with students who are tutees of other staff. Staff have also been told by the University not to take action on student's behalf or counsel them because we are not professionally trained for this. The University has a race equality policy but no one is willing to stick their neck out enough to implement it when it comes to a case.*

When study is made open to foreign national students, it follows that pastoral planning should be part of the deal: Students bring their commitment to learning and their cash, education establishments provide the teaching and a supportive learning environment. An imbalance in that compact is a formula for setting students up for failure. The factors described above demonstrate the student needs that a supportive learning environment should meet. Broadly speaking these elements fall under the headings of language support, emotional wellbeing and anti-racism

measures. An understanding of institutional racism (see chapter 7) is also critical to ensuring that these three areas are effectively addressed.

The argument for providing language support to students recruited from overseas, also applies to resident EAL speakers. Chapter 3 demonstrates that half of the Black and Minority Ethnic population in Devon have migrated from overseas. If this is the case, language is bound to be a study support issue, even if a person's ability to speak conversational English is 'good'. The language skills involved in study extend beyond the skills required of one-to-one conversation which is more responsive to both parties' communication needs. Study involves extended listening and speed writing skills, use of technical jargon, and ability to work with peers and staff who will use colloquial English, often with varied regional accents. Hence language support needs should be checked for resident students too.

A case-worker described the frustration of one student who suffered career and financial setbacks as the result of a University's failure to assess language needs:

 *They failed her in January. We think she failed because they didn't support her/ didn't give her a chance - so she's off the course. English ability was cited as a problem [with the University], but no-one ever raised this with the student until she was failed. The student has paid for the course out of her own money.*

The language and cultural diversity that is part of Britain's multi-ethnic demography and economy inevitably shapes the profile of the student population. Services, including education, that don't make provision for diversity can effectively exclude potential learners or set them up to fail. We heard of one case of a college's resistance to widening participation described by a case-worker:

She applied to do a computer course. She filled in the application form, was interviewed and told that she wasn't accepted on course because she 'wouldn't fit in' (not because there was a waiting list, which was main official reason later given).

We heard from several students who indeed felt they didn't fit into mainstream culture among their peers, which serves to underline the importance of education establishments' Duty under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) to promote race equality in the learning environment, among staff and students.

Appendicies

This handbook and supporting tools ✂ can be accessed at www.DevonREC.org

The Appendix to this Chapter is web-based and includes the Participants' problem analyses and recommendations for:

- Racism on the street and in school
- The impact of loneliness and isolation for overseas students
- Promoting race equality in education