

ST MATTHIAS C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL – DIVERSITY

Background

St Matthias is a multi-racial Church of England primary school, which is situated in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The school has a very diverse catchment area and has 221 children in 8 classes. The current ethnic mix is as follows:

26% Bangladeshi heritage children
9% Caribbean or mixed heritage
58% White English, Scottish, Welsh
3% Other African- mainly West African
4% Other white – South African, Swedish, Kosovan

The project was undertaken by one main external consultant, with some input from one other. Additionally, there was a session delivered by a theatre in education group.

This is a culturally sensitive programme that brought together a combination of various prevention/ intervention strategies in a unique way.

The project focus chosen was in response to the School's most recent Ofsted inspection report, which identified the need to address issues of multiculturalism within the context of the diverse school population. The framework used was the Standards for Racial Equality in Schools (see Appendix 1). The standards provide a useful basis for the school to review their policies and practices to identify what action needs to be taken in order to implement the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and to meet National Curriculum and Ofsted requirements. The four stages of the process of applying these standards are outlined in Appendix A and it is recommended that the school adopt this four- stage process in reviewing and amending its current policy and practice.

In order to effect a whole school approach in the area of applying the Standards for Racial Equality in Schools, there is further work to be done with respect to implementing all the aspects of the standards (including working with Governors and parents).

Aims and Objectives of Project

The overall **aim** of the programme is:

To support the process of moving towards an inclusive school while providing an anti-racist approach to education by increasing knowledge, awareness and understanding of lifestyles and cultures within the school and the local community.

Phase one of Training Programme

The school recognised that, to facilitate working on the area of an anti-racist approach to education, it needed to consolidate the existing good practise and reassess the work of EAL.

Objectives of teacher training session on 29th January 2001:

1. To raise the teachers' awareness of the principles of EMTAG
2. To develop speaking and listening strategies for the class teacher that will support pupils learning English as an additional language
3. Offer a strategy for the use of "home language" in classroom
4. How to use parents and support staff to enable speaking and listening strategies for the class teacher that will support pupils learning English as an additional language

Phase two of Training Programme

7th March 2001 - teaching staff training session (now postponed to 14th June 2001)

9th March 2001 - teaching support staff training session

Objectives of these teacher and support staff training sessions

1. Appreciate the differences in norms and customs of the diverse school community and local population while embracing the similarities.
2. Support differences in order to ensure that they do not divide members of the school community.
3. Understand the difficulties experienced by minority groups, and their experience of discrimination and racism, while acknowledging the disadvantages of socio-economics and lack of a positive identity and academic achievement.
4. Recognise the links between local and school community and race relations and the need to deliver an appropriate curriculum, which makes these both implicit and explicit.

This training was offered to teaching assistants on 9th March. The training scheduled for the class teachers needed to be postponed till 14th June 2001.

These objectives were achieved through the following training programme

Timetable for Staff INSET 9th March 2001

1. Dimensions of Culture Prejudice, Discrimination and racism
2. Allports scale of prejudiced action and an exercise based on Allports
3. Responses to dominance
4. Values and beliefs

Meetings on 9th March 2001

9.30 - 10.30 Meeting with class teacher to plan work to be done with Year 3 class

10.45 - 12.00 Meeting with class teacher to plan work to be done with Year 4 class

Decisions reached with teachers for delivering training were that the training should use audio and visual media as necessary to raise the children's awareness of the following:

1. Prejudice and discrimination
2. The cycle of prejudice and discrimination
3. Perspectives through pictures
4. Identifying bias Awareness - worksheet
5. Looking at values and beliefs through the Alligator river boat story

Teaching staff training session 14th June 2001 (originally scheduled for 7th March 2001)

The school's governors were unable to attend this session, although they were invited by the headteacher to do so. This session addressed the following areas:

1. Defining the dimensions of Culture, Prejudice, Discrimination, Racism
2. Defining and dealing with and recording a racial incidents
3. Standards for Racial Equality in Schools
4. Developing a School's Race Equality Action Plan
5. Conducting an audit in the school

Both of the above sessions terminated with the participants being asked to complete and keep an action plan that identified their future input.

Third Phase of Project – Work with Students 3rd, 17th May, 21st June 2001

The objectives of this phase were to:

1. Appreciate the differences in norms and customs of the diverse school community and local population while embracing the similarities.

2. Support differences in order to ensure that they do not divide members of the school community.
3. Encourage the pupils within the school to become critical thinkers so that they can be independent and responsible learners who are able to recognise the transferable skills from their daily lives within the school and local community.
4. Improve the social competence of the students.

In this phase of the work I worked with children in Year 3 and Year 4. The work with these children revolved around raising their awareness of prejudice and discrimination and understanding the relationship between these two. The area of dogmatic belief and stereotyped views was challenged through using an alternative version of a popular children's tale and other pictorial resources. In this way the children were helped to recognise that any picture or event can have more than one perspective.

They were able to see that difference is not necessarily negative and that it can be enriching. The students were taken through a number of exercises, which enabled them to challenge any stereotypical ideas that they may have had. They were encouraged to look at their values and understand how they got to those values.

Centrally, through the use of other exercises, the children were able to engage in the process of thinking critically as they used problem-solving skills while also "thinking outside the box".

Methodology

Through the use of one to one and group sessions participants were able to develop appropriate skills while simultaneously engaging in their personal growth and development.

Through the medium of these training mechanisms, participants were able to:

- learn piecemeal
- collectivise their insight
- share the experience of their growth.

Training Mechanisms

The training was delivered in a setting that was both learner-centred and learning-centred. Whereas in the former, attention was paid to the needs and interests of the individual participants, in the latter, the focus was on providing an appropriate and stimulating training programme.

Where appropriate, the programme utilised the following training mechanisms:

Small Groups and Whole Group work
 Discussions
 Debriefing
 Feedback

Evaluation

Outcomes

Overall the staff spoke positively about the sessions and commented that they gave them much to think about and try out with the school children.

They appreciated that success was a progressive process and that they needed to be consistent in the application of the principles learnt, before positive results could be shown to be a lasting phenomenon within the school.

Samples of participants' expectations of the session were?

Responses to this question were	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Information" 2. "Discuss only racial issues i.e. bullying" 3. "Not quite sure at first"
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Sample responses in order to the question "how were your expectations met" were:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Raised awareness of the issues on a common sense approach and to try to avoid it" 2. "It was a much more diverse session. I feel that I have been made aware of a number of new issues (i.e. made to think differently)" 3. "Can we have more time more training"
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The general remarks in subsequent training were that there was recognition of the need for the raising of this type of awareness. The staff recognised the need to be aware of and monitor the incidents and incorporate awareness of diverse cultures in their work.

Overall the staff felt that the training met their expectations.

One of the things which emerged from the training was an awareness of the extent to which Black members of staff felt that white parents were hostile to them and there was an undertaking to inform SMT about this and take action regarding it.

Recommendations

The school needs to adopt the new definition of 'institutional racism' and review its policies and practices against this definition.

There is a need for the school to define in its Behaviour Policy Document what a racist incident is. Furthermore the school needs to undertake to record all such incidents and inform parents and governors of any such incidents and what action has been taken to deal with them.

The school needs to have a senior member of staff and a governor who are responsible for monitoring incidents and reviewing policy and practice in this area.

The school governing body needs to provide an annual report to the LEA on the pattern and frequency of racist incidents in their school.

Race equality and challenging racism need to be key themes within the school's regular planning and review cycle. The School's Development Plan is a key vehicle for identifying and addressing issues, gaps and practice in these areas.

Appendix 1

Standards for Racial Equality

The Standards for Racial Equality in Schools identify seven core areas, which need to be addressed when developing a School's Race Equality Action Plan. These are:

- ⌚ Policy, Leadership and Management
 - ⌚ Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment
 - ⌚ Admissions, Attendance, Discipline and Exclusions
 - ⌚ Pupils - Personal Attainment and Progress
 - ⌚ Attitudes and Environment
 - ⌚ Parents, Governors, Community Partnerships
 - ⌚ Staffing, Recruitment, Training and Professional Development
- [Developing a Race Equality Action Plan](#)

The following are the suggested stages in developing a Race Equality Action Plan:

- ⌚ Develop a framework for action
- ⌚ Conduct the Audit in each of the seven areas
- ⌚ Develop and implementing an Action Plan
- ⌚ Review and Evaluate

It is suggested that these stages follow the following guidelines:

Stage 1- Develop a framework for action

- } Obtain commitment and ownership at senior level
- } Identify and agree a framework for the whole process
- } Draw up timetables for action
- } Decide who is responsible for what
- } Identify and involve a critical friend
- } Identify training and support needs

Stage 2 Conducting the Audit

- ┌ Use the Audit forms provided
- ┌ Use the checklist accompanying each standard
- ┌ Look for evidence to support the responses and keep a record of it

Stage 3 - Developing and implementing an Action Plan

- ┌ Prioritise targets - SMART
- ┌ Allocate responsibility for achieving specific targets to named individuals
- ┌ Ensure that targets in the racial equality action plan are linked to the School Development Plan and other school action plans
- ┌ Use the information to identify needs and allocate funding

Stage 4 - Review and Evaluation

- ┌ The school management team and school governors should regularly review and evaluate progress towards achieving the racial equality action plan
- ┌ Regularly review the schools policies, procedures and practices from a race equality perspective
- ┌ Ensure that pupils, parents and sections of the school community are consulted and involved in reviews and evaluation
- ┌ Ensure that small scale reviews are built into the racial equality action plan and are reflected in the school's development plan