

Notes from the Racism & Diversity Parent Forum held via zoom

Monday 28th September 2020

Present 54 households including Jeanette Brumby, Hania Ryans , Emily Bruggy, Leanne Cowley, Rachel Whitely and Nara MacKenzie.

Hania Ryans opened the meeting

HR: Please remember this is not a forum for discussing individual incidents. Please contact me separately. We would like this to be an open discussion about how we can work together to become an anti-racist school and further celebrate diversity. We have reviewed your questions from the survey monkey and put the agenda under three headings but are happy to be flexible. Please let us know via the chat function if you feel we have not covered something or, if you would like to ask, another question please put it in the chat function and we will review and answer these as we go through. Please feel to join in.

We will be starting by talking about our recent training with BLAM (Black Learning and Mental health). We will then hear from a couple of parents before we open up the forum.

Schools can change pupils' lives, which is why it is important that we have an inclusive and supportive approach. Young people's ideas about race must be explored and discussed. Education is a crucial place where we can challenge all forms of racism and discrimination.

It is important that we develop CPD and engage with external agencies to develop and build anti-racist practices. We need to give children and us time to learn and discuss. Tonight it is important that we listen and learn together.

JB: It has been an interesting journey where mistakes have been made. We want to learn together and take the journey together. Some of this involves decolonising the curriculum with support from BLAM. Giving black parents a voice, getting our communication right and involving everyone.

Parent: This is a great opportunity to engage with the school on how we educate our children. School is fundamental in their education but parents at home play a big role. This started with an open letter from families of colour sharing their stories and there were some common threads. It was interesting how people react to stories, talking about racism is uncomfortable, but voicing concerns takes a lot of energy and talking about negative experiences is a hard thing to do. Because we have lived these experiences, we can read between the lines of what our children say. It can be hard and awkward but we need to engage, reflect and respond when our instinct is to defend. It is not only about black kids, we have a lot of different backgrounds we all need to look at social circles outside the school who surrounds us, are our circles mixed.

JB: As a white person, I do not live your experiences, it is about understanding our own privilege.

Parent: Aware of the black curriculum amplification highlighted by Black Lives Matter. It motivated me to look at the Primary Schools. None of it is specific to schools; Gavin Williamson gave it lip service but said it will not happen any time soon. What can we do to address it within the current

framework? Formulating a spreadsheet of the curriculum, it shows topic and wider understanding of Black history. Wider understanding of who the people are, who don't look like us. There has been a positive response from the school. There is a book list for children as it is important for all children to see positive black role models. Teaching children the whole history. Lots can be added to the spreadsheet.

EB: Resourcing a diverse curriculum can be difficult, some resources are hard to find. We recently had BLAM training for all staff, showed us how to teach African and Caribbean history. It included training on anti-racism teaching. BLAM took our basic topic map and showed us how we can embed Black British history throughout our topics.

BLAM: Working with Fairlawn curriculum to ensure that black narratives are taught within the curriculum not just during black history month.

Parent: Unconscious bias – do we do any work around this?

BLAM: We did cover narratives of other cultures; there is space for work to be done. One of the projects we do is a Black History after School Club.

EB: We enjoyed the training and will continue to work together.

JB: We need to continue to support and work together, the work is ongoing. Money is set aside. We continue to work to become and actively anti-racist school. In the hope that this continues when we leave. We want to raise achievement; there is still so much to do.

Parent: How will it show in the curriculum?

JB: We have a legal responsibility to teach the curriculum but can add detail to fit the purpose. We want to make sure that Black history is not just an add on.

Parent: Overhauling the curriculum, my child is higher up in the school, what quick fixes now can we put into place to see immediate action and commitment?

EB: Practical training, involved identifying key black lives that could be put into place for this term. We are doing a blue plaque project, there are 980 plaques around London and only 4% represent Black and Asian people. We are planning a blue plaque virtual event, with a tour of the school rather than museum event. Identifying important characters and why they were exceptional readdressing the balance.

JB: asking for parent reps across the schools, so that we can have a continued conversation.

HR: Suggested that after listening to everyone's comments, it would be good to meet every half term. We will regularly update parents in the newsletter.

Parent: How many parents have had the same experience, what we can do to support each other?

JB: We will work with you and your children we passionately want to make a difference.

EB: There are unconscious bias assessments on Harvard University online.

<https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>

This could be an uncomfortable journey for us all, to become an anti-racist school. We can share the books that we have been reading with you. When it comes to reporting racism incidents there is not a new way but being more mindful and naming them as racist incidents will be important. We are in a better place to recognise racist incidents.

Parent: How can we train teachers to understand racist comments?

HR: By learning through training and reading and by communicating with our community what a racist comment is plus communicating to the parties involved when it happens.

Thanked everyone for their engagement

EB: Gave her email address for those who wish to contact regarding any individual incidents.

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