Promoting race equality
Engaging with research

Contents

Background

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act of 2000 threw down the gauntlet to the whole public sector. It asked the sector to prove its commitment, both present and future, to providing services on an equal basis to all their communities.

Given the systemic and systematic inequalities in achievement, this is a pressing issue for schools and for teachers. Although schools cannot single-handedly tackle all these inequalities, they have long been concerned about the extent to which they are promoting equality of learning between black and minority ethnic (BME) pupils and their peers.

There have been many studies with BME pupils which compare the issues they face with those of their peers. Few studies though have explored the important contribution of teachers, and thus the practical strategies and solutions they can deploy to promote equality.

This GTC resource helps to fill the gap. In it, we have brought together some of the cumulative findings from research about effective teaching and learning from the Research for Teachers pages of our website.

We take as our principle that BME pupils learn in the same way that other pupils learn, but then they face additional obstacles. These flow from:
- the lack, in some teachers, of a detailed picture of BME pupils' experiences; this makes it harder for these teachers to identify strengths, build on them, and pinpoint specific needs; and
- many schools having organisational norms insufficiently informed by BME pupils' experiences and perspectives, hence they feel unable to make themselves heard and understood.

Such obstacles render the least meaningful learning activities especially tough and/or overwhelmingly frustrating for BME pupils. But they can all, as the Cambridge professor Donald McIntyre reminded us, respond powerfully to beautifully planned, crafted and responsive teaching and learning activities.

This anthology highlights the evidence about key strategies teachers can use to maximise their BME pupils' learning potential. We have aimed to bring this evidence to practical life through a related set of taster activities to try out in classrooms.

Please let us know how you get on. BME pupils deserve the very best our profession can offer, and our profession will be the richer and stronger from making sure this happens.

How successful schools promote equality for all pupils

Research shows that schools which are successful at promoting equality of opportubnity for BME pupils are characterised by certain principles.

- **High expectations.** Every pupil is expected and encouraged to achieve their potential, both by teachers and parents. In the process, effective schools focus on improving the self-esteem and self-confidence of BME pupils as well as achievement.

- **High quality teaching and learning.** Lessons are planned and delivered in ways that will enhance the achievement of all pupils, whilst careful monitoring enables teachers to pinpoint and tackle underperformance.

- **An ethos of inclusivity and respect, welcoming of diversity.** A commitment to inclusion can be shown explicitly, for example through wall displays, and implicitly through classroom teaching practices. Schools which achieve an ethos of respect have clear and consistent prevention-led approaches to bad behaviour, bullying and racism.

- **Effective partnership between parents and schools.** Parents are positively encouraged to play a full part in the life and development of the school and in their children's learning. Establishing good home-school links also helps teachers to build a better picture of pupils' needs.

We explore each of these areas in separate sections divided into themed pages. Most themed pages have a 'How to use the evidence' section, which gives you questions for follow-up, and an 'evidence box', about the research the evidence is drawn from. To follow up the research, go to the Research for Teachers section of the GTC website: see next section.

We also include case studies carried out by teachers that illustrate some of the key messages. They are valuable because they are all based in everyday classroom activity and show how teachers have adapted research evidence for their own contexts. Finally, we provide suggestions for related research, summaries of research, and resources we think will help you make use of this evidence.

Research for Teachers

The Research for Teachers (RfT) section of the GTC website makes the key findings of academic research studies available to teachers. All the studies featured are chosen by the Research for Teachers team from the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (Curee) for their relevance to classroom practice, and the quality of their evidence is carefully appraised.

There are now over 50 Research for Teachers summaries. Only a small number focus specifically on the needs of BME pupils. We have therefore drawn on other key texts from beyond the collection (see 'Further reading', page 38) to ensure that we have selected the evidence that is most useful in addressing the challenges you face on a daily basis.

As well as the full RfT summaries themselves, look out also for the 'research tasters', bite-sized summaries with busy teachers in mind.

To go directly to the Research for Teachers area of the website, go to: **www.gtce.org.uk/teachers/rft**

Section 1
Beliefs and expectations

What effective teachers believe

Your beliefs about learning are the foundation upon which you make choices about how to teach.

We know from research that some beliefs are deep-seated and 'taken-for-granted', rather than conscious decisions. Such unconscious beliefs are rarely questioned and can have a profound and lasting effect on how you act.

What beliefs do teachers hold that help them to promote pupil learning?

Beliefs act as a filter for noticing and categorising information. They determine how you interpret new information and react to it, whether the new input comes from your pupils' responses to a learning activity, from research, or from theory.

Teachers have been found to have strong beliefs about such issues as:
• whether a pupil's ability to learn is fixed or can be changed;
• whether learners benefit more from working with others or from working individually;
• appropriate ways to respond to learners'mistakes and how this might encourage or discourage them from taking risks; and
• the promotion of positive beliefs amongst pupils.

Can you change your beliefs?

Changing your beliefs isn't easy, but it is possible. It's certainly worthwhile if you become aware of evidence mounting up that doesn't fit your world view. Doing action research or getting involved in coaching, and especially watching and analysing video footage of your teaching, can help you uncover and examine your beliefs – and make big changes to your practice. Monitoring and tracking your pupils' progress can also lead to helpful and evidence-informed reflection on your own practice and beliefs.

> **Evidence box**
> The evidence on this page is mainly rooted in these RfT summaries.
> • Effective teachers of numeracy
> • Teachers and school-based research
> • Making the difference: teaching and learning strategies in successful multi-ethnic schools

> " **Changing your beliefs isn't easy, but it is possible.** "

The cycle of under-achievement

Sometimes teachers expect too little from pupils. They think that they won't be able to get good examination results or aspire to go into higher education.

Sometimes those low expectations relate to racial stereotypes. Such stereotyping then tends to reinforce a cycle of under-achievement. Unless we expect more from young people, whatever their ethnic background, they will expect too little of themselves.

The evidence from several RfT studies suggests that if you expect that all pupils have the ability to achieve, you are likely to be more successful in promoting high standards than teachers who believe that ability is fixed – they consequently have low expectations.

According to the research, teachers who believed that the ability of pupils in low sets was limited actually taught in ways that played a part in depressing these pupils' attainment. Those teachers had low expectations of 'low-ability' pupils and taught in heavily structured ways that were unhelpful when pupils needed to use their knowledge in unfamiliar contexts. With the best of intentions, these teachers used:
• a great deal of repetition, practice and 'rote' learning;
• very little discussion;
• a series of closed questions that funnelled pupils unthinkingly towards particular responses; and
• procedures to help pupils reach a 'correct answer' that relied more on using memory than on understanding.

If a pupil persistently failed to grasp a concept, teachers who were positive that all pupils had the ability to achieve tried new approaches to overcome this.

Teachers who believed in fixed ability were likely to attribute this lack of success to the pupil: for example, they may have believed that the pupil was not ready to learn a concept. These teachers then tended to return to practising skills learned earlier. They may also, again with the best of intentions, have set pupils tasks that were too easy and lacked challenge,

because they did not want their pupils to become discouraged.

On the other hand, the research shows how effective teachers:
• tried to understand what their pupils already knew or believed;
• adjusted or changed their teaching to address particular misunderstandings; and
• persisted in trying a variety of approaches.

Effective teachers in these studies generally believed that activities should challenge all children, not just the most able. As one mathematics teacher put it:
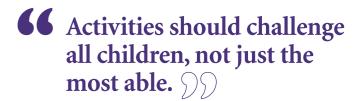"…I have the same expectations for all the children, I think about it as not so much what the children are doing as what they have the potential to do."

When pupil tasks were open-ended and motivating, teachers were often surprised by just how much their pupils could achieve. This in turn led to higher expectations for the future.

> **Evidence box**
> The evidence on this page is rooted in these RfT summaries.
> • Effective teachers of numeracy
> • Making the difference: teaching and learning strategies in successful multiethnic schools
> • Inside the literacy hour
> • Effective literacy teaching in the first years of school
> • Inclusion and pupil achievement
> • ICT for teaching and learning
> • Consulting pupils about teaching and learning
> • Grouping pupils and students – what difference does the type of grouping make to teaching and learning in schools?
> • Experiencing secondary school mathematics

> " **Activities should challenge all children, not just the most able.** "

Promoting high expectations

Successful schools work to create an environment in which all young people feel valued and able to develop confidence and self-esteem. They have high expectations of *all* their pupils, and they recognise the corollary: they positively encourage pupils to have high expectations of themselves.

Such schools treat students of all ethnic backgrounds, and with all kinds of learning needs, as potential high achievers. Commonly perceived disadvantages, such as a poor command of English, are regarded as challenges to be met rather than reasons or even excuses for underachievement.

Research summarised in RfT shows that teachers who were effective at promoting pupil self-confidence:
• praised pupils for their effort, attention and achievements;
• taught them to recognise and celebrate other children's achievements;
• prevented misbehaviour by redirecting pupils' attention to aspects of their work as soon as they appeared to be distracted; and
• gave them information about their work that highlighted its positive qualities.

Case study 1 (page 27) shows the positive effects of focusing pupils on improving their levels of effort. When teachers rewarded students' effort and participation, pupils' self-esteem, willingness to work hard and attainment all improved.

Giving praise is important; so too is *how* praise and rewards are given. When researchers asked pupils about praise and rewards, they found that young pupils seemed happy to receive merits or reward stickers in class or during assemblies, but secondary students often found public rewards embarrassing. Pupils of all ages however, appreciated letters of congratulation sent home to their parents, positive comments written on their work and praise and encouragement in annual reports.

Case study 2 (page 28) explores the impact of specific praise on pupils' persistence with learning.

The evidence shows that building self-confidence is about more than praise. The research suggests that what's needed is specific, helpful advice on what pupils can do to improve. Teachers in these studies:
• scaffolded pupils' work to help them understand relevant language, concepts and skills;
• used a collaborative, questioning approach to learning;
• listened to and valued the contributions of pupils; and
• made it clear what actions pupils needed to sustain, as well as areas for development.

Pupils also felt more confident about their ability to learn when they understood how assessment could help them make progress. We explore these effective teaching strategies in section 2.

The researcher Carol Dweck recommended that adults encourage a belief in their ability to learn in learners. Learners would then view poor performance on a task as something that could be improved by effort and persistence, rather than as a personal, negative reflection on them. She suggested that teachers could support learners' persistence by equipping them with problem-solving strategies that were specific to the particular challenge they faced.

Dweck also recommended that teachers explicitly taught learners about the need to expend time and effort when learning a skill, and that initial failure was a healthy sign that a challenge was worth pursuing.

The evidence seems clear. Teachers who demonstrate their own belief in their pupils encourage them to do their best and to believe in themselves are likely to boost their pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem too. Confidence and high expectations, it seems, are catching.
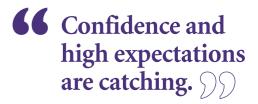
How to use the evidence

• Share ideas with colleagues about how you communicate all your expectations to different pupils. You could also consider how the positive and negative expectations and/or assumptions about particular pupils influence their performance. How could your assumptions about certain pupils be modified and your expectations raised?

• Pupils who are confident and who have high self-esteem also hold high expectations of themselves. Praise is one way of boosting pupils' confidence and self-esteem. But what you praise and how you praise matters – it's clearly inappropriate to praise inadequate work. What more could you do to find positive qualities in *every* pupil's work and ensure they receive praise in ways they appreciate? Is there more that you could do to help your pupils see how they could improve their work too?

Evidence box
The evidence on this page is rooted in these RfT summaries.
• Effective teachers of numeracy
• Effective literacy teaching in the first years of school
• Consulting pupils about teaching and learning
• Experiencing secondary school mathematics
• Promoting students' persistence in meeting learning challenges

" Confidence and high expectations are catching. ''

Section 2
High quality teaching and learning

How effective teachers promote high achievement

How monitoring can help schools target specific pupil needs

Effective teachers use the best teaching strategies to enhance the achievement of all pupils, whatever their ethnic backgrounds. These include strategies for:
- raising overall achievement levels; and
- responding to individual needs.

This section gives an overview of what the RfT summaries suggest that effective teachers do to raise achievement levels generally. Then we explore effective approaches for responding to specific individual needs.

There are three main areas of action where the evidence of improved pupil learning is both plentiful and sound:
- thinking skills;
- assessment that promotes learning and helps teachers to monitor the impact of their teaching – 'assessment for learning'; and
- collaborative learning.

Thinking skills

The past 20 years have seen a good deal of research into how pupil learning can be accelerated. The process always involves pupils working with others to make their thinking explicit, learn from each other and construct a deeper understanding from their separate insights.

For example, one two-year programme aimed to increase students' understanding in science. It relied heavily on structured discussion amongst groups of students to create a new, joint understanding. The students discussed cause and effect, their reasons for making particular predictions, experimental evidence and scientific principles. Their performance in tests at the end of the research period improved and so did their GCSE grades.

Assessment for learning

Gathering accurate information about each pupil's learning, and using the information to adjust teaching so that it better matches pupils' needs, is at the very heart of effective teaching.

The evidence that such formative assessment results in substantial learning gains – particularly among low-attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties – is strong and extensive. But there are two pre-requisites.

Teachers need to establish two-way feedback with pupils, both by improving questioning and changing the way they mark work. Then they need to continually adjust their teaching to take account of what they have learned about their pupils from the assessment process.
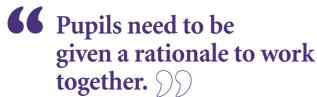
One important objective of formative assessment is for pupils to develop self-assessment skills to enable them to learn independently.

Collaborative learning

There is strong research evidence that collaborative learning can effectively promote pupil understanding, increase motivation to learn, and enhance competence and self-esteem.

But it's not just a case of seating pupils in groups and expecting them to work together productively. When pupils are sitting in a group, but without any specific requirement to work together, they are likely to work individually. They need to be given a rationale to work together.

It is also important to teach interpersonal and small group skills explicitly to help pupils interact well and get the most out of collaborative learning.

> " **Pupils need to be given a rationale to work together.** "

How thinking skills help pupils achieve higher standards

Thinking skills approaches all share a core of similar features.

Concrete preparation (preparation for the task)

To make the most of a cognitive challenge, pupils need to be prepared for it. To do this, teachers need to:
- recap relevant aspects of what pupils have already learned;
- highlight and clarify the meaning of essential vocabulary through discussion with the pupils; and
- help pupils become familiar with the task and what they have to do.

Setting a cognitive challenge

A cognitive challenge is one that challenges someone's usual way of thinking or perception of the world. It may introduce new information that does not fit with previous experience. The uncertainty arouses curiosity and makes pupils think. The tasks should be interesting and challenging, but achievable with the help of others.

Social construction of learning (working collaboratively)

Once pupils have been set the challenge, they work together to solve it with the support of both each other and the teacher. By discussing with others, pupils create a 'dialogue' within themselves in which they check and refine their own thinking.

RfT studies have shown how pupils were more motivated to learn if they worked in this way. They were less enthusiastic if they received precise instructions from the teacher to carry out a task designed solely to convey a particular point.

Metacognition (awareness of thinking)

Whilst pupils are working together on a task the teacher prompts them to say what they are thinking and why. This helps them become more consciously aware of their own thinking. The discussions pupils hold whilst tackling the task may well lead naturally in this direction as they explain their thinking to each other. But sometimes their talk may leave their thinking quite implicit.

Bridging (pupils using what they know in new situations)

Bridging is the final stage in accelerating learning. It involves the conscious transfer of a reasoning pattern from its initial context to a new context. Sometimes, pupils grasp new skills in one situation, but do not make generalisations that help the skills to transfer to other contexts.

One method of bridging is simply to offer an example of a similar situation to pupils and give them a few moments to discuss differences and similarities between that situation and the original problem, in pairs. Another is to use plenary sessions as an opportunity to broaden pupils' understanding by connecting what they have just learned to other situations.
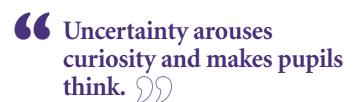
How to use the evidence

- With thinking skills, it is important to make sure that you and your pupils share an understanding of the vocabulary used to explain or set a task. How might you plan to pay enough attention to the meaning of specialist vocabulary during your introduction to a topic, particularly for EAL pupils? How can you check your pupils' understanding of a task?

- Getting pupils to think aloud helps them to find out and compare what they and others think, and moves them towards new understandings. Could you encourage this process of thinking aloud by modelling it for pupils and by praising pupils specifically when they share their thoughts? How could you help pupils to understand that a suggestion that does not work can tell you as much as a suggestion that does work?

- Extending learning across a variety of contexts helps pupils' understanding. How could you encourage pupils to identify everyday contexts to which new knowledge might apply?

Evidence box
The evidence on this page is rooted in these RfT summaries.
- Improving learning through cognitive intervention
- Social interaction as a means of constructing learning: the impact of Lev Vygotsky's ideas on teaching and learning

> **Uncertainty arouses curiosity and makes pupils think.** 〝〞

How assessment can help promote high achievement

Learning something new always involves a lack of control and the probability of making mistakes. It can feel a risky business.

Pupils feel more confident about their ability to learn when they understand how assessment can help them make progress, that is, through formative assessment (or assessment for learning). Against this sits summative assessment, which can just make pupils more conscious of what they *can't* do than what they *can*.

Formative assessment is characterised by the key teaching processes of effective marking and good dialogue with pupils. These help teachers find out more about their pupils' learning, and hence to use it as a basis for planning learning objectives that match pupils' needs.

Marking work to improve pupil attainment

The traditional practice of giving marks and grades *judged* pupils work, but did not explain to them how they could *improve* it. It also emphasised competition and tended to discourage pupils who did relatively badly.

Research shows that it is important that teachers give pupils feedback that makes them think. This is achieved by making comments that:
- identify what has been done well;
- identify what still needs improvement; and
- give guidance on how to make that improvement.

It is also important that teachers plan opportunities for pupils to follow up and act on comments, for example, by using some lesson time to allow pupils to redraft their work.

How quality classroom dialogue can help

Effective teachers believe that pupils can learn a lot from mistakes and learn most when they take the risk of exposing their ideas to others' scrutiny.

For example, RfT summaries show how effective teachers in mathematics and science listened carefully to discussion so as to diagnose the thinking that lay underneath pupils' errors. They then explicitly discussed these errors and misconceptions with pupils to improve understanding.

According to the evidence, effective questioning is key to this process. Teachers who aimed to improve their questioning techniques found it useful to:
- take time to frame questions that were worth asking because they developed pupil understanding;
- extend the silence after asking a question to allow pupils to think;
- discourage the practice of using 'hands up' to indicate that a pupil knows the answer; instead, they expect everyone to be prepared to answer, possibly after discussion in pairs;
- ask pupils to explain the reasons for their answers.

All answers, whether right or wrong, can then be discussed and used to develop understanding.

How to use the evidence

- Giving feedback to pupils about their learning, both orally and in writing, is a key component of formative assessment. Factors include the timing of feedback, emphasis of positive achievement in individual feedback, the use of comments rather than grades, and the use of clear criteria in marking. Could you discuss approaches to feedback with your colleagues and share examples of good practice?

- The kind of dialogue that takes place in the classroom matters. Effective teachers exchanged ideas with their pupils, uncovered misconceptions and talked with them in ways that developed their understanding. So in Q&A sessions, could you do more to:
  - help more pupils contribute to discussions, by giving them extra time to think about their answers?
  - make a special point of seizing on pupils' misconceptions as a positive contribution to the learning process in order to provide a building block for further discussion?
  - ask more questions designed to help develop pupils' understanding?

- Would you find it helpful to investigate how you might improve the dialogue that takes place in your classroom? You could, for example, audio-record a lesson, transcribe some of your interactions, and reflect on how you might have probed and challenged your pupils' thinking even more.

Evidence box

The evidence on this page is rooted in these RfT summaries.
- Raising standards through classroom assessment
- Assessment for learning – putting it into practice
- Learning how to learn through assessment for learning
- Effective teachers of numeracy
- Learning science – transforming pupils' everyday ideas about science into scientific thinking
- Effective talk in the primary classroom

> " **Learning something new can feel a risky business.** "

How to structure group work to promote achievement

To ensure pupils collaborate, they need to be put in a situation that *requires* them to interact and cooperate in order to complete the task or solve the problem.

Pupils need to be given a task that requires them to:
- work together as a group;
- exchange ideas;
- challenge each others' reasons and understandings; and
- discuss alternatives.

The stimulus could be visual or text based, but it is helpful to use a stimulus that is likely to provoke a variety of opinions from within the group. For example, pictures of disasters, such as the effects of the tsunami on Sri Lanka and Indonesia, could be used to promote a discussion about what could or should be done to minimise such happenings in the future.

Pupils need specific training and support from teachers to get the most out of co-operative group learning. You need to teach students to:
- ask questions
- be active and persistent in seeking help from their peers;
- give help that is detailed; and
- check that the help given is understood by the recipient.

You can help pupils to learn how to do this by modelling the types of verbal exchanges that encourage pupils to express ideas, explain reasons and solicit help.

Here are some of the skills you will wish to encourage amongst pupils, together with the comments or questions that exemplify them.

Skills	Comments and questions
Reflecting meaning	It sounds as though ...
Challenging and probing thinking	What makes you think ... ?
Offering tentative suggestions	Have you thought about ... ?
Focusing on key issues	What have you decided is the main problem here?
Focusing on solutions	What might you need to do now to find the solution?
Validating efforts and ideas	What an interesting suggestion!
Encouraging consensus	Have you discussed this with the others?
Clarifying options	So you've decided you could try it this way or that way …
Reframing statements to help pupils consider an alternative view	On the one hand, I hear you saying ... but on the other hand, you seem to ...
Seeking other opinions	What do you think?

When teachers support small group discussion, their language tends to be more personal, friendly and supportive than it is in whole-class settings, when they tend to spend more time directing, lecturing and disciplining students. So you may wish to adopt an informal style of verbal interaction with pupils when you want to support their discussions.
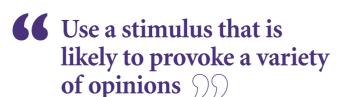
How to use the evidence

- There is much evidence of the value of truly collaborative learning. What types of task have you found are most productive for group discussion that uses the perspectives of all group members?

- The ability to ask open-ended questions, and to promote extended responses by asking for reasons and explanations, both help teachers to promote effective collaborative learning. How do you model these skills for your pupils?

❝ **Use a stimulus that is likely to provoke a variety of opinions** ❞

How monitoring can help schools target specific pupil needs

Effective schools make practical use of data and monitoring. Detailed monitoring, which includes monitoring attainment by ethnic group, enables them to identify individual and specific learning needs.

It can also be a helpful exercise for raising teachers' expectations of pupils. Bald facts, plainly presented, can cut through unconscious expectations teachers may have of various ethnic groups.

The monitoring strategies used by effective schools share a number of common features. These include making sure that the process:
- is dynamic and constantly updated;
- takes into account feedback from staff; and
- works at a very detailed level.

Schools have, for example:
- used ethnic monitoring by group to highlight specific high-achieving groups to raise attainment further, or under-achievers to identify where support was needed;
- monitored pupil performance in the pupils' home languages and added these to the database of whole-school records;
- compared predicted and actual grades in national tests to help identify weakness in written work among bilingual pupils who otherwise showed fluency in their work; and
- monitored their special educational needs register to check whether one ethnic group occurred disproportionately in it.

Teachers found that monitoring helped them to reflect on how they can enhance their own practice in response to the needs of individuals and particular groups. As one teacher noted: 'I think we've moved on. We don't talk so much about faults lying with the child. We are looking much more closely at *our teaching*'.

Once the needs of individual pupils are identified, the task of developing systems of pupil support can begin. These can include language support, mentoring, and homework and revision clubs.

Pupils seen to be falling behind can be given support on a number of levels. For example, support for reading can include:
- a daily reader's class;
- a reading recovery programme;
- timetabled twice-weekly cross-phase attainment groups for English; and
- individual special educational needs (SEN) support.

Some of the evidence here comes from two of the case studies. Case study 3 (page 29) shows how a teacher noticed that a group of Pakistani students were falling behind in science, and how she went about closing the gap in their attainment. Case study 4 (page 31) shows how one school went about supporting the language needs of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL).

Mentoring, sometimes but not always by members of the same ethnic group, can also be used to support pupils. Case study 5 (page 32) shows how a teacher raised spelling achievement in her class (of which 72 per cent spoke English as an additional language) through pairing higher-attaining with lower-attaining pupils.

In another successful strategy, pupils were offered additional curriculum support programmes, such as homework clubs which target individuals who have fallen behind with their homework, or who feel marginalised. These recognise the fact that some young people and groups face many external pressures that work against good school performance.

How to use the evidence

- Teachers found that monitoring attainment by ethnic group helped them to reflect on their own practice. They no longer saw lack of progress as the fault of the child – if they saw that learning had failed to take place, they reflected on why this was so, and what they could do to help. Could you do more to find out how much individual pupils learn from the activities you offer them? You could, for example, ask your pupils from time to time what they feel they have learned and what they need more help with.

- There is evidence that pupils respond positively to additional support provided through homework and revision clubs. What would a review of support clubs in your school reveal? Could you target such clubs more effectively towards the needs of individual pupils, for example by finding out about and making connections with learning from pupils' other extra-curricular commitments, such as Quranic classes?

Evidence box
The evidence on this page is rooted in these RfT summaries.
- Inclusion and pupil achievement
- Making the difference – teaching and learning strategies in successful multi-ethnic schools
- The impact of study support

❝ We don't talk so much about faults lying with the child. ❞

How to make your classroom more inclusive

Inclusive classrooms embrace diversity.

Highly inclusive schools show their commitment to inclusion explicitly, for example through displaying photos around the school of many diverse pairs of pupils with a slogan such as 'All different – All equal'. In other schools, the commitment is expressed less overtly, but is systematically embedded in school and classroom practices.

In such schools there is often a high level of staff collaboration and joint problem solving, and similar values and commitments may extend to pupils, parents and other community stakeholders in the school.

On this page we look at ways of enabling pupils to collaborate effectively together; we look at ways of collaborating effectively with parents on the next page.

Widening participation – helping pupils to work together effectively

So that the group experience is genuinely inclusive for all pupils, teachers need to train and support them about how to work together as a group. One effective strategy that teachers use is to model the way they want pupils to talk with each other, such as:
- asking why;
- using 'because' to give reasons for statements;
- asking other pupils what they think;
- making sure everyone in the group agrees before making a final decision; and
- pointing out that that they are making use of these strategies to make group discussion more effective.

Other important skills that can be modelled and developed include:
- listening attentively to other pupils and building on their ideas;
- sharing information; and
- showing how to make critical arguments for and against different cases.

Pupils are quite capable of setting ground rules for group discussion in their own words. Indeed, it can be a key way of supporting pupils to work inclusively and effectively together. It's not difficult to run: during a guided discussion, the teacher draws from the class the kind of rules they think should be used in group work. The resulting list is displayed on the wall for pupils to refer to in the future.

A class might come up with something like this.

- Discuss things together. That means
  - ask everyone for their opinion;
  - ask for reasons why; and
  - listen to people.
- Be prepared to change your mind.
- Think before you speak.
- Respect other people's ideas – don't just use your own.
- Share all the ideas and information you have.
- Make sure the group agrees after talking.

The support given by ground rules is particularly helpful to BME children. Researchers in one study noticed that without it, children with EAL often sat in groups without speaking or became disruptive out of boredom. They found that ground rules encouraged other children to draw these children into the group discussion.

To find out more about how training pupils how to interact and reason with each other can help children with EAL, see case study 6 (page 34).

How successful schools create an ethos of respect

Successful multi-ethnic schools tend actively to foster a culture of respect for people – between individuals and cultural groups, and also between the school and its students. They recognise that policies in themselves are not enough; equality has to be established in practice.

Listening to pupils

Within successful schools there is a belief that all pupils are entitled to have their say and to have their concerns taken seriously. Staff listen to the issues that pupils raise. They take note too of how pupils perceive the school and their relationship with it, both as individuals and as members of different cultural groups.

Listening to, and taking seriously, pupils' concerns, is successful as a first step to tackling severe under-achievement, because it creates the right atmosphere to change pupils' attitudes to achievement.

For example, staff at one school made listening to students a central strategy. They noticed that African-Caribbean boys at the school felt they were the most likely to be subjected to unfair practices. When they asked these students, they found one reason they gave for feeling excluded was the lack of black people's history studied at school. The school responded by amending its curriculum to include a module on black people's history, and relationships subsequently improved.

Clear approaches to behaviour and bullying

In successful multi-ethnic schools there are clear boundaries of behaviour and systems of rewards and sanctions which the pupils recognise as fair. Pupils from all ethnic groups benefit when standards of behaviour are high.

Pupils also expect high standards of their teachers, for example, to be polite and not 'talk down' to them.

Successful multi-ethnic schools also have clear approaches to bullying and tackling racism, with an emphasis on the prevention of both. Several studies have shown that secondary schools in particular may find that a direct teacher-intervention approach to bullying is unsuccessful, because many adolescent students are either opposed to collaborating with teachers to combat bullying, or are unsure whether they want to collaborate.

Teachers may find it better to adopt a more peer-led approach, for example by working with an anti-bullying committee of students, who could give support and credibility to the teachers' efforts, or working with students who have bullied others, using a non-punitive, 'no blame' approach.

How to use the evidence

- To ensure pupils work productively with each other, put them in a situation that *requires* them to interact and co-operate. What type of task do you use that can only or can best be carried out by a team in which pupils take on different roles?

- It is important that pupils share expectations and understand clear guidelines on how to behave during group discussions. One way is to elicit ground rules from pupils in their own words, but there are other ways too. What have your colleagues found to be effective ways of negotiating agreed rules of behaviour with their classes? Could you build on their work with your students? Do different kinds of rules work particularly well for specific sub groups of BME pupils? If so, how can you link what works for them and for the group as a whole?

- To help build an ethos of respect, it is important to listen to pupils' concerns and show that you take their concerns seriously. Staff at one school found that pupils felt they were being treated unfairly because the curriculum did not reflect their cultural background. Would you find it helpful to consult your pupils? Could you do more to represent all relevant cultural backgrounds in the subjects you teach? For example, in English you could decide to make links between the text being studied and traditions within different cultures such as Islam.

- Having a clear and effective approach for managing behaviour and bullying is important too. Would you find it helpful to work with groups of pupils to develop behaviour codes and combat bullying and racism?

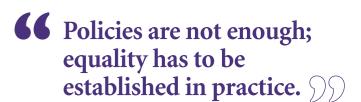> **Policies are not enough; equality has to be established in practice.**

Section 4
Effective partnership

Good communication with parents

Research shows that parental involvement in their children's education is a key factor in pupils' attainment, and this is the case across all ethnic groups.

A key issue here is that what counts most is discussions about learning between children and parents in their homes. But some parents don't see it as their role to get involved, whilst others don't know how to support their child's learning at home. Establishing closer home-school links helps parents understand how they can help their children succeed.

For example, parents who have limited fluency in English, or lack first-hand experience of the English school system, can find it difficult to know how to support their children's education appropriately.

Closer links benefit teachers too. They help teachers build a better picture of pupils' needs, and to become aware of the barriers their families may face. If teachers understand what influences pupils out of school hours, they are better-placed to tackle barriers to educational attainment.

But establishing good communication is not always easy. For a variety of reasons, communication with parents in multi-ethnic schools often requires greater resourcefulness and a more innovative approach than in other schools.

Parents do not always find it easy to contact schools about their concerns, and schools find it a challenge to communicate effectively with some parents. In particular, non-English speaking parents and Gypsy Roma Traveller parents can feel intimidated and excluded by schools whose structures and culture may be alien to them.

It takes time to build trust and confidence. There are many examples where efforts to involve parents do not work, particularly when parental contact is focused more on asking them to support the school than to support their children.

What is needed is persistence and experimenting with different ways of making parents feel valued. Successful strategies for building good communication links with parents include:
- offering flexibility in the timing of interviews and meetings;
- translating formal communications into community languages;
- providing a named member of staff that parents can approach on a one-to-one basis;
- displaying material and signs around the school in community languages;
- providing interpreters and/or using teachers from minority communities for home-school liaison work;
- holding meetings and workshops to explain National Curriculum tests and teaching methods;
- inviting parents to help or take part in lessons;
- distributing questionnaires to gauge opinions on important matters;
- providing booklets, with translations, containing information about the curriculum and teaching methods;
- setting up support networks to introduce parents to other parents who speak the same language;
- using the services of local refugee community groups to help communicate with refugee parents; and
- recognising parental cultures – for example, by a focus on Black history, or providing dual language books for pupils and parents to share.

Some of the more innovative strategies that have been successfully used are:
- exhibitions out of school, for example at the local supermarket;
- materials for parents to borrow or view at school; for example, DVDs showing pupils in their classrooms, or booklets explaining calculation procedures;
- the reverse procedure – giving pupils a disposable camera so they can take photographs at home of maths and literacy activities, and then show them at school; and
- giving pupils an empty shoe box to bring possessions and artefacts from home into school, and so deepen teachers and fellow pupils' understanding of learning in different home contexts.

Case study 7 (page 36) describes a project designed to help parents see that they could play an effective role in their child's learning. The project took place in a middle school where 95% of pupils were from the local Asian community.

How teachers benefit from good home-school links

Knowing about different ways of learning

Two-way exchanges of knowledge between home and school can give teachers the opportunity to understand the different ways some children are being 'taught' out of school.

For example:
- one study showed how families of Asian origin used traditional practices of 'strand counting', counting on fingers and finger joints to represent units; and
- a child who was learning Punjabi at her local Gudwara was given novel strategies for memorising the letters by her grandfather, as she 'couldn't keep them in my head'.

These strategies had been passed on to children, but the teacher was often unaware of them.

Knowing about diversity of culture and experiences

When they look into their pupils' backgrounds in depth, teachers can be surprised by the diversity of culture and experiences they discover. This in turn can lead to reflection on how well their teaching draws on and accommodates the diversity among their pupils.

For example, teachers who encouraged their pupils to bring in items from home in a shoebox and discuss them, ended up asking themselves quite fundamental questions about their own role and the role of school in children's learning. One teacher said:

'If you look at these boxes you can see all the differences in just a small group of children … all too often this diversity is closed down in schools. Do we make them conform too much?'

Breaking down stereotypes

A study which focused on transferring knowledge from the homes of children from BME groups showed the sometimes stereotyped nature of this knowledge and the ways in which it changed and developed over time. Different children from the same ethnic background were observed to have very different home lives.

The study showed that getting to know minority families better can help to overcome such cultural and racial stereotypes.

How to use the evidence

- Research shows that parental involvement is a key factor in pupils' attainment across all ethnic groups. What counts most is discussion about learning between children and parents in their home. Could you do more to promote conversations between children and their parents, for example by asking children to collect artefacts or take photographs at home, or setting interactive homework activities specifically designed to involve parents?

- Some parents don't see it as their role to get involved, whilst others don't know how to support their child's learning at home. What opportunities could your school provide to help them see how they can help their children at home and the importance of doing so? (For example, workshops and discussion groups to see how children learn particular subjects.) Could you monitor whether the strategies you use to increase parental involvement contribute to increased pupil learning? Could you share with parents the evidence that their efforts have an impact?

- It is clear that 'hard to reach' parents are not a homogeneous group and that different strategies are needed to engage different parents. For example, whilst some parents may fill in return slips and read leaflets, others will need personal invitations to appointments. Do you currently provide a sufficient range of methods for parents to engage with the school, to ensure that all preferences are catered for?

- When teachers look into their pupils' backgrounds in depth, they can be surprised by the diversity of culture and experiences they discover. Would you find it helpful to find out more about your pupils' home learning experiences, perhaps using the shoebox or photography activity as a starting point?

> " **Parental involvement is a key factor in pupils' attainment across all ethnic groups.** "

Case studies

We have included seven case studies that illustrate some of the key messages about promoting equality for BME pupils.

Case study 1
Improving achievement by raising self-esteem

We chose this study because it showed the positive effects of focusing students on improving their levels of effort. The teachers found that rewarding students' effort and participation led to improvements in students' attainment, including BME students.

The study took place in an urban secondary school in a deprived area. Nearly 80% of students had reading scores at least two years below their chronological age on entry to the school.

The study focused on groups of bottom set science students as they moved from Year 8 through Year 9. It aimed to boost self-esteem, oral contributions during lessons and overall attainment in science by using a reward system.

The teacher used a wide range of additional strategies for improving student participation in the lessons. He aimed consistently to reward attempts to answer questions in science lessons by awarding a sticker. The collection of 20 stickers by any student led to a merit award. Forty led to a certificate and a letter home. Sixty stickers won the student a prize, a special certificate and a letter home.

The teacher used the stickers frequently, especially for students who were initially reluctant to answer, and he gave double rewards for scientific answers. He aimed to encourage all students to participate and to think and attached no blame to 'wrong' answers. He accepted all contributions, no matter how 'correct' they were. If students did not understand, he took responsibility for this, saying, "I haven't explained that very well", rather than, "You weren't listening".

The teacher encouraged the students to talk to one another, by setting oral and explanation tasks in every lesson. He encouraged work in pairs and groups. Every lesson had a short period of paired work in it. He demonstrated good listening skills in order to teach students how to work well in pairs. He encouraged students to give positive feedback to one another.

He taught them to ask for and to offer help to one another. He varied the pace and tasks in lessons and set clear learning objectives. These were expressed by using phrases such as: "By the end of the lesson, you should be able to know / understand …"

He also encouraged students to identify their own and others' strengths and to set themselves personal targets for improvement.

The students involved in the project greatly increased their involvement in question and answer sessions. They remembered the key scientific facts they had studied and their scores on module tests improved. Although the students' scores on a test of general self-esteem did not show a significant improvement, they made many positive comments about their progress and ability in science as the study progressed. For example, students made comments such as:
• "Science is my best subject."
• "She's a super scientist like me now, sir."

Students were able to remember the learning strategies outlined to them during the project. They also showed an improved attitude to science and there was a great reduction in disruptive behaviour during the course of the project.

Reference
Dunsmore, A. (1997) *Improving science achievement by raising self-esteem*. Published by the Teacher Training Agency as part of the Teacher Research Grant Scheme 1996/97.

Case study 2
The usefulness of specific praise

We chose this case study because it shows the form of praise which is most helpful for learning and enhancing confidence and self-esteem.

The study investigated the impact of different types of praise. It showed that praise that provided informative and specific feedback on the processes and outputs of pupils' work helped to promote effort, persistence and progress. It involved four teachers in two English primary schools and 109 Year 4 pupils aged eight to nine years.

The researchers introduced the teachers to two different types of praise, which they called positive praise and specific praise. The teachers then used one of the two types of praise during daily numeracy lessons with their class. Each type of praise was used by two of the teachers.

Positive praise expressed approval, affirmed a correct answer, or gave general, positive reinforcement for aspects of behaviour, for example, "well done", "nice job" or "clever girl".

Specific praise expressed approval and also explicitly linked the praise to actions taken by the pupil. It described precisely the behaviour or aspect of work that was being praised, for example, "it is clear that your essay was thoroughly researched and it provides quality evidence to support your conclusions".

The study found that both types of praise increased the time pupils spent concentrating on their work and seemed to elicit a more positive response.

In addition, the specific praise had the following positive effects on pupils.

- They became more aware of what made them successful at tasks.
- They became more capable of dealing positively with failure when they received explanations about successful academic performance.
- They became more open to challenge and willing to attempt difficult tasks.
- They became more settled during group work.

The teachers involved in the study reported that they had become more aware of the praise they gave and that they praised pupils more frequently. Although they found it easier to praise groups than individuals, the study helped them pay more attention to precisely who and what they were praising.

Reference
Chalk, K & Lewis, A. B (2004) Specific praise improves on-task behaviour and numeracy enjoyment: A study of year four pupils engaged in numeracy hour *Educational Psychology in Practice* 20 (4), pp.335-351

Case study 3
Monitoring and targeting the needs of EAL students in science

We chose this case study because it is an example of a teacher who noticed a group of pupils were falling behind in a particular subject and went about closing the attainment gap.

The study took place in a specialist technology college with 1,800 pupils on roll, 10% being Black or minority ethnic. It was prompted by the teacher's analysis of the school's national test results. This showed that students whose ethnicity was Pakistani were falling behind the main school population in terms of achieving Level 5 in both mathematics and science. There was a gender effect too: the gap between the majority school population and Pakistani girls was even greater than that for boys.

The teacher, an ethnic minorities achievement (EMA) co-ordinator, set out to investigate why the students of Pakistani origin could achieve Level 5 in English in KS3 SATs, but not in science. In order to gain a picture of the difficulties the Pakistani students felt they encountered and the way in which they could be helped to overcome them, she videoed groups of BME pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. She also interviewed boys and girls from each age group in separate, small groups.

She found that the EAL learners felt they needed:
- specific teaching of key words; and
- a scaffolding for writing up practical work.

Key words

Many of the students identified new vocabulary as a problem. They felt that a lot of new words were 'coming at us too quickly' that they didn't have time to really understand. One student explained why they didn't ask teachers to explain the meaning of science terms:

"I didn't want the teacher to think I didn't understand because they could think I'm in the wrong set, but I don't understand because I'm learning in another language."

The students suggested they would like dictionaries that gave specific scientific definitions of words. One student remarked:

"When I look in a dictionary for a word I see lots of explanations, but I don't know which is the science one."

Writing

The students also found writing in science difficult because they were unsure how to write up practical work. One student commented:

"I wrote down Method, Result and Conclusion for lots of experiments and never understood and still don't know what to write in each heading."

Some of the students felt that they copied work from the board that they really did not understand and that it was therefore no help to them when they came to revision. They commented that when they were copying from the board the teacher would be explaining the work. They found this particularly frustrating, as they could not fully concentrate on the explanation as they were concentrating on accuracy.

The EMA teacher together with the science teachers developed a range of teaching and learning materials for two Year 7 groups based on the students' comments. These included:
• games and activities using key words from two modules to be used in pairs or small groups, such as card games matching words and meaning, and putting key words in sentences;
• worksheets to aid the writing up of experiments using ideas such as cloze activities, sequencing and use of tables;
• writing frames to 'scaffold' students' report writing which offered sentence stems, connectives, and specific vocabulary for students to follow; and
• a science dictionary containing key words for each topic with simple definitions.

The teacher evaluated the impact of these strategies through student comment, end-of-module tests and classroom observations. The end-of-module tests showed that the majority of the group had improved; in particular, the structure of their written work, and their use of specific science vocabulary, had improved.

The students also felt they had more information in their exercise books to revise from, and that they had taken a more active part in their report writing, not merely copying from the board.

Staff noticed that teaching the students specific keywords helped the students improve their oral contributions, and that the students were more likely to use the correct vocabulary in their group discussions.

Reference
O'Connor, J (2004) *Improving outcomes for learners with English as an additional language (EAL) in science.* National Teacher Research Panel

We chose this case study because it shows how one school went about supporting the language needs of its pupils.

The study took place in an inner-city primary school with an intake that was 98 per cent bilingual in Bengali and English. Its pupils came from very disadvantaged backgrounds.

On entry to the school most children could speak only a few words of English and over a fifth of pupils were on the SEN register. The school's success with these children was shown in 1997 with achievement in the KS1 national tests at or above the national average in all subjects. This progress was maintained through KS2 where the percentage of pupils reaching level 4 or above was at least at the national average across the core subjects.

This result was highly significant because it showed that EAL learners were achieving at a high level given the level in English they began with.

A major factor in the school's success was the attention paid to language development. The school had developed a comprehensive strategy, which included the following features.

• In the early years, a bilingual programme supported children through the transitional phase of learning English.

• An ethnically mixed staff made it possible to place a dual-language speaking member of staff in each class.

• While a bilingual approach to teaching and learning was maintained as the children moved up through the school, Bengali was used less in more formal teaching situations.

• By the start of KS2, teachers and assistants normally used English when working with the children.

• In Year 6, no extra bilingual support was provided in the classroom.

The school had produced a detailed whole-school language policy that was updated regularly. It was a useful, practical document because it included specific advice to staff about ways of developing language across the curriculum.

The school transferred Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (Emag) teaching roles between teachers as part of staff development, a strategy that built up language support skills and experience among all teachers and helped to integrate Emag teachers more closely into the school staff. Observers noted the consistency of approach across the school, with Emag and class teachers interchanging smoothly in the classroom.

The school also regarded extra-curricular activities as an important strategy in developing children's confidence and competence in English. In addition to a 'science week' and a 'poetry fortnight', regular activities included:
• visits to museums and galleries;
• artists and poets visiting the school;
• commercial production of a school newspaper;
• commercial publication of children's own poems;
• a joint public concert with a local music college;
• a street art project; and
• a highly successful 'Business in the Community' initiative with a large international law firm.

Reference
Blair, M. & Bourne, J, et al. (1998) making the difference: Teaching and learning strategies in successful multi-ethnic schools

Case study 5
Raising achievement through pairing higher attaining and lower attaining pupils

We chose this case study because it shows how a teacher in a multi-cultural primary school in London (in which 72% of pupils spoke English as an additional language) used mentoring to enhance children's performance in a specific area – spelling.

The project helped the pupils learn and remember a wide variety of strategies they could use when they were unsure of the spelling of a word. Working together benefited both the more able and less able spellers.

How did the teacher set up the paired work?

At the beginning of the study, the teacher assessed the pupils' spelling using a standardised test. She then used the results to pair the higher scoring pupils (the helpers) with the lower scoring pupils (the spellers), pairing the top-scoring helper with the top-scoring speller.

For each 15-minute spelling session (there were three sessions a week for six weeks), pupils were given two words to learn that illustrated the phonological rule of the week. She did not make the underlying rule explicit; rather she provided them with the opportunity to actively discover the rule through investigation and discussion.

When they had learned the words, the spellers chose other words they felt would be useful to learn and worked on these with their helper. The helper assisted the speller in learning how to spell words, following a ten-step procedure.

The ten steps were:
1. Pupils select a word to learn or were given target words
2. Pairs entered the words into their spelling diaries
3. Pairs read the word together
4. Speller and helper choose cue together
5. Pairs repeat cues aloud
6. Speller says cues while helper writes word
7. Helper says cues while speller writes word
8. Speller writes word quickly and says cues aloud
9. Speller writes word quickly
10. Speller reads word aloud.

The teacher demonstrated the ten steps to the class, following a discussion about difficulties the pupils were having with some spellings. She explained to the pupils that those who were finding spelling tricky had been paired with somebody who could help them practise and learn different spellings. She repeated the demonstration the following day and put up a poster explaining the ten steps.

Whilst the pupils were working on spelling in their pairs, the teacher focused on one or two pairs of pupils, asking them about what they were doing and guiding them in making generalisations from the words they were learning to other words with similar characteristics.

At the end of each session, the helper gave the speller a test to assess the short-term recall of the day's spellings. The teacher then invited the pupils to report back and demonstrate to the class some cues they had found helpful.

What effect did the project have on the pupils?

The teacher noted a marked difference in the pupils' attitudes from her observations and interviews with the children. The changes were still apparent six months later.

Pupils in the class were more confident, both about the spellings they knew, and about ways of finding out and learning new spellings. The pupils made greater independent use of dictionaries and relied less on one another for how to spell a word.

When they did ask one another how to spell a word, the other pupil wrote the spelling down and put a circle around the 'tricky bit' to help their friend remember the spelling. Previously, the pupils would spell the word out orally, letter by letter.

The pupils were also able to discuss a wider range of techniques for learning and remembering spellings. For example, they said:
• I think of something else that's got that word in it
• I learn the word, say if it was similar to something, I could learn it
• I would look it up in the dictionary
• I'd use it a lot of times
• I'd put it up in a room so I could see it and remember it.

Interestingly, the *helpers'* spelling attainment continued to improve during the six months after the intervention, whereas the *spellers'* test scores remained the same as they had been at the end of the intervention period. The teacher suggested that this may have been because the helpers were more able to generalise about new approaches that they used which they could then apply independently.

The helper pupils had been put in a situation where, in every session, they had to explain and rehearse rules for the benefit of their speller and they were able to hang their new-found techniques onto their already well established knowledge. Although the use of improved skills was not reflected in the spellers' test scores six months later, they were still able to articulate them during interviews and the teacher observed them using the strategies.

Reference
Sowerby, J. (1998) *Extending children's spelling strategies.* Teacher Research Grant Summary, 2nd year 1997-98.

Case study 6
The impact on achievement of teaching children how to reason together

We chose this case study because it shows the benefit of teachers supporting pupils' group work activities through teaching pupils how to interact and reason with each other.

In six classes, the teachers implemented a programme of lessons designed to improve the pupils' spoken language skills. In five control classes, teachers and pupils pursued their normal activities. All the schools involved had low levels of academic achievement, a high proportion of pupils from low income families, and many BME pupils who spoke English as an additional language.

What the programme involved

The teachers, helped by the researchers, generated a programme of lessons designed to improve the pupils' skills in talking and listening in groups. Early lessons in the six-month programme focused on raising an awareness of the importance of talk while developing skills such as listening, sharing information and cooperating. Later lessons encouraged critical argument for and against different cases and applied the approach to various curriculum subjects, including history and geography.

Pupils were usually placed in groups of three, but sometimes pairs and larger groups were used, depending on the specific task. Each group was of mixed ability, which enabled each group to include a fluent reader and writer. Pupils had opportunities to practise giving and asking for reasons and discussing alternative ideas. Classes created and agreed a set of ground rules for discussion that would help them to reach a group consensus.

How the pupils benefitted

The pupils in the target group learned to involve each other, listen carefully to what was said and to respond constructively, even if their response was a challenge. They asked more questions and gave reasons more often than the pupils in the control group.

The target group pupils also completed more puzzles correctly on a reasoning test after the programme than before. The control group pupils' interactions did not show a similar pattern of change.

All the teachers in the target schools felt that the programme had had a positive impact on collaboration and inclusion in their classroom. Specifically, they reported that their quiet children became more confident and participated more in discussions. They attributed this to the use of small groups, and the ground rules of listening with respect and asking others what they thought.

Teachers commented how the programme worked for all pupils including those with SEN and those for whom English was an additional language.

"There's one little girl who's both EAL and special needs and to see her animated in a lesson is just wonderful."

The researchers showed the change in use of language with a case study of three children – Nuresha, Vijay and Kyle – from one of the target schools. They were videoed as they worked together on a reasoning problem before the programme had started, and again after the programme had finished. The problem involved selecting one jigsaw piece out of six that they thought would fit into a blank space on a geometric pattern.

Before the programme

In the first video, Nuresha did not speak at all and was disengaged from the task – she sat back from the table, sometimes looking around the room or playing with her ruler. Shortly after starting on the task, Vijay and Kyle started to disagree over the answer and who should record it, without attempting to provide reasons for their opinions or seek each other's views.

Vijay: It's this one, isn't it?
Kyle: No.
Vijay: It's this one, isn't it?
Kyle: No.
Vijay: Yes.
Kyle: No.

After the programme

The pupils worked in a completely different way. This time, Nuresha was more involved in the group's shared reasoning – encouraged by the other two children, who now listened to one another and accepted each other's viewpoints.

Vijay: (to Nuresha) You have to say 'what do you think, Vijay or Kyle?'
Nuresha: I think that (number 2)
Kyle: I think that (number 4)
Vijay: Nuresha, look.
Nuresha: I think, that, that, that.
Kyle: No, because, look, because that goes round. It goes out. It goes out.
Vijay: Or that one.
Kyle: No, because it hasn't got squiggly lines.
Vijay: It has to be that.

The pupils answered two more questions correctly (out of 15) during the second test than in the first. The researchers suggested this was further evidence that the pupils worked together more effectively as a group to solve the problems after the programme than they had before.

Reference
Wegerif, R., Littleton, K., Dawes, L., Mercer, N. and Rowe, D. (2004) Widening access to educational opportunities through teaching children how to reason together *Westminster Studies in Education* Vol. 27, No. 2.

Case study 7
Promoting parental involvement

We chose this case study because it is an example of a project designed to help parents see that they could play an effective role in their child's learning.

The project took place in a middle school that had around 400 pupils on roll, of whom 95% were from the local Asian community. Many pupils entered school with a reading age well below average. The school undertook their 'parent partnership project' in response to:
- staff concerns about the lack of visible parental involvement;
- recognition that some parents felt unable to support their child; and
- the views of some pupils that their parents could not help them because they were not fluent speakers and readers of English.

To begin with, the school wrote a letter (available in several languages) to all families of pupils in Years 5 and 6, inviting them to take part in an 'exciting partnership' designed to help improve their child's reading and enjoyment of books. Around 50 parents (35% of the Key Stage cohort) responded to the letter.

Teachers, helped by a bilingual member of staff, interviewed these parents and their children in school, in their home or in a local community centre. The interviews explored:
- opportunities in the home for reading and learning;
- what parents needed from school to help them support their children; and
- how the school and parents could work together.

The teachers found that the majority of parents did not believe that they could have a role to play in their child's learning because they were unable to read and write in English themselves. The school also found that although parents said they were satisfactorily informed about their child's progress, in reality they had little understanding of the actual processes.

The school decided to organise gatherings in the parents' homes – inviting groups of mothers to look at a wide range of books to try to increase their ability and confidence to share and explore books with their children. The school identified several key households to work with and as targets for establishing good relationships.

Then the school borrowed a large selection of books from the schools library service. At each book session, three members of school staff, including a bilingual member of staff, sat with a group of mothers and looked at and discussed the books. Ten gatherings were arranged in total, attended by around 100 parents.

The school also produced a partnership project newsletter that contained information about school events and suitable books that could be bought at local bookshops or borrowed from the library. School staff took several groups of parents on a library visit.

By the end of the project:
- the school had an improved relationship with Asian parents – many Asian parents had been involved in a dialogue about using books and supporting children's learning;
- parents had become more actively involved in their child's school education – attendance at school meetings and consultations increased from 25% to 50% and more parents came into school to ask questions;
- attendance had improved – the number and length of visits the children made abroad during term time fell;
- parents had improved their knowledge and understanding about using books – they learnt how the school used books, how to use books themselves with their children and how to use the library;
- pupils' library use had increased;
- staff had gained greater insight into the boundaries of pupils' home literacy and the parents' need for information and practical support; and
- pupil performance in the end of Key Stage tests had improved by 17% in English, 10% in mathematics and 27% in science over the previous year.

The school felt that a number of factors contributed to the success of the project, including:
- women gathering at each others' homes for a "women's" event was a traditional activity and therefore not threatening;
- being in a large group with a common language helped the women feel less threatened by their lack of English; and
- the rolling programme meant that a large number of staff could be involved.

Reference
Offord, J. (1998) The Highfield parent partnership project. Bradford Education Service

Further reading

Sources used for the anthology

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links_and_publications/

Improving BAME achievement: solving the problem
I&DEA, 2008 (revised)
Search 'improving achievement' from
www.idea.gov.uk/idk/laa/home.do

Raising achievement levels for minority ethnic pupils:
Exploring good practice
DfES, 2002
At www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/search, check 'ethnic
minorities' and search on 'removing barriers'

The Research Informed Practice Site (TRIPS)
Ethnicity digests
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/themes/Ethnicity/

Related websites

Ethnic Minority Achievement website
This website has information about raising achievement,
collecting and using data, and good practice.
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/

Partnerships and places
Replacing the neighbourhood renewal website, this area of the
I&DEA website has a library of case studies about
partenrships.
www.idea.gov.uk/idk/laa/home.do

Taking it global: Cultural diversity
This website has been designed to foster understanding,
acceptance and constructive relations between people with
diverse cultural backgrounds.
www.tigweb.org/themes/diversity/home.html

Related research

Ethnic Minority Achievement website
This website contains links to a range of useful research
publications.
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/
links_and_publications/

Evaluation of Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement
Project
Available at
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/
ACAPevalrsrchreportoct06.pdf

Race equality in education: Good practice in schools and local
authorities
Ofsted, 2005
Search 'race equality' on www.ofsted.gov.uk/
Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research

Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Three Successful
Primary Schools
Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Good Practice in
Secondary Schools
Both from Ofsted, 2002
Search 'black caribbean' on www.ofsted.gov.uk/
Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research

Case studies

The standards site
Good practice case studies on a range of themes, such as
inclusion and literacy, are available at
www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk

Study support
Good practice case studies on the theme of study support are
available at
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/casestudies/
typelist/

Resources

The national literacy strategy: Supporting pupils learning
English as an additional language
CPD resource
DfES, 2002
Search 'literacy english additional' on
http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/

Parents as partners in learning
Packages and leaflets designed to help schools think about how
they can share information with parents and encourage
parents and families to share with the school
www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentsaspartnersinlearning/
homeschoolpartnerships/

Leaflets for parents
'Help your child discover' leaflets designed for parents to help
their children with homework in a wide variety of languages
www.parentscentre.gov.uk/publications/

Materials for schools
Strategies and ideas for involving parents from the Specialist
Schools and Academies Trust. Website needs registration:
www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk/pages/default.aspx

Promoting race equality

Birmingham: Victoria Square House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B2 4AJ.
London: Whittington House, 19-30 Alfred Place, London WC1E 7EA.

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