

---

# education review

## Valuing identity and diversity



---

volume 20 • number 2  
Autumn 2007

*Education Review* is the journal of the National Union of Teachers. It is published twice a year. Correspondence about editorial matters should be sent to the editors, Janet Theakston and Lucy Carpenter, at the Education and Equal Opportunities Department of the NUT, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD. Tel: 020 7380 4717.

*Education Review* is published for the NUT by the Education Publishing Company Ltd., Devonia House, 4 Union Terrace, Crediton, Devon, EX17 3DY, to whom correspondence about business matters, including subscriptions and advertising, should be sent.

**Subscriptions.** The subscription rates for volume 20 are given below. Subscribers in Australia and New Zealand may pay in local currency or pounds Sterling. Payment in Australian dollars should be sent to Yvonne Buckley at the Education Publishing Company of Australia. Payment in New Zealand dollars should be sent to Pat Sallis at the Education Publishing Company of New Zealand Ltd. Payment in pounds Sterling should be sent to The Education Publishing Company Ltd in England. Subscribers in Commonwealth countries other than Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain should send orders, with payment at the special Commonwealth rate, to the Education Publishing Company Ltd in Britain. Payment should be by cheque, MasterCard or VISA credit cards or electronic transfer.

Subscribers in the United Kingdom should send their orders to the Education Publishing Company Ltd in Britain. Payment may be by cheque, MasterCard or VISA credit cards, or BACS. A discounted subscription rate exists for NUT members with an address in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

Subscribers in the USA should send their orders to the Education Publishing Company Ltd in Great Britain. They may send payment in US dollars or pounds Sterling at the rest of the world rate.

Subscribers in all other countries should send orders to the Education Publishing Company Ltd in Great Britain, with payment at the European or rest of the world rates in pounds Sterling drawn on an account from a bank with a branch in the UK.

Subscribers in all countries of the world can place an order via our website at [www.educationpublishing.com](http://www.educationpublishing.com) using the WorldPay secure payment system. Payment must be made by credit card in any of the following currencies: pounds Sterling, Australian dollars, Canadian dollars, Cypriot pounds, euros, Maltese lira, New Zealand dollars or US dollars. Orders can be placed by telephone, fax, email, website or post using the address information given below.

Subscription rates for volume 20, 2007 are as follows. *Education Review* is available in traditional paper format and electronically, sent as a PDF file attached to an email. Individual subscribers should specify which format they want.

## Subscriptions

Institutions, Australia	A\$149
Institutions, Britain	£55
Institutions, Commonwealth	£60
Institutions, Europe	£60
Institutions, New Zealand	NZ\$185
Institutions, USA	US\$95
Institutions, rest of the world	£65

The Education Publishing Company Ltd  
Devonia House, 4 Union Terrace, Crediton, Devon,  
EX17 3DY. Tel: 01363 774455.  
Email: [info@educationpublishing.com](mailto:info@educationpublishing.com)

The Education Publishing Company of Australia  
PO Box 390, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7006, Australia  
Email: [epca@educationpublishing.com](mailto:epca@educationpublishing.com)

The Education Publishing Company of New Zealand Ltd  
PO Box 109481, Newmarket, Auckland, New Zealand  
Email: [epcnz@educationpublishing.com](mailto:epcnz@educationpublishing.com)

Individuals, Australia	A\$55
Individuals, Britain	£16
NUT members, UK	£10
Individuals, Commonwealth	£20
Individuals, Europe	£20
Individuals, New Zealand	\$65
Individuals, USA	US\$35
Individuals, rest of the world	£24

— THE —  
**EDUCATION PUBLISHING**  
— COMPANY LIMITED —

[www.educationpublishing.com](http://www.educationpublishing.com)

---

# education review

## Valuing identity and diversity



volume 20 • number 2  
Autumn 2007

*Education Review* is produced by the Education and Equal Opportunities Department of the National Union of Teachers.

**Assistant Secretary, Education and Equal Opportunities**

John Bangs

**Editors**

Janet Theakston, Lucy Carpenter and Richard Stainton

**Assistant Editor**

Candy Kisseih Akomfrah

**NUT Executive Editorial Board**

Hazel Danson (Chair)

Angela Davies

Nina Franklin

Max Hyde

Tim Lucas

Veronica Peppiatt

The views expressed in *Education Review* are those of the individual authors. They are not necessarily the view of the National Union of Teachers.

A priced list of back issues of *Education Review* is available from the Education and Equal Opportunities Department of the NUT.

Tel: 020 7380 4717.

The National Union of Teachers

Hamilton House

Mabledon Place

London WC1H 9BD

Tel: 020 7388 6191

Fax: 020 7387 8458

**Web: [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk)**

# education review

# contents

volume 20 • number 2

<b>Preface</b> <i>Steve Sinnott, General Secretary, NUT</i>	1	<i>Heidi Safia Mirza, Professor of Equalities Studies, Institute of Education, London University</i>	40
<b>Identity, diversity and citizenship</b> <i>Keith Ajegbo, former head teacher of Deptford Green School, Lewisham</i>	4	<b>Parenting support can help parents to develop better relationships with their children and reduce the risk of behaviour problems</b> <i>Judy Hutchings, Research Director, Incredible Years and Tracey Bywater, Project Trial Co-ordinator, Incredible Years</i>	51
<b>How society can create the conditions for all children to enjoy a good childhood</b> <i>Bob Reitemeier, Chief Executive, The Children's Society and Zoe Mason, Campaigns and Media Officer, The Children's Society</i>	9	<b>IntoUniversity: Making it happen</b> <i>Rachel Carr, Chief Executive, IntoUniversity</i>	62
<b>What is the place of race in the debate about choice?</b> <i>Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, Runnymede Trust</i>	16	<b>Girls and exclusion: Why are we overlooking the experiences of half the school population?</b> <i>Audrey Osler, founding Director, Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights Education, University of Leeds</i>	71
<b>Educational achievement and social class</b> <i>Bill Greenshields, Vice President, National Union of Teachers</i>	22	<b>"T'ain't what you do (it's the way that you do it)": Challenging the boys to do better</b> <i>Allison Crompton, head teacher, Middleton Technology School, Rochdale</i>	80
<b>"Troublous times": Perceptions, myths and the dangers of demonising young people</b> <i>Doug Jewell, Campaigns Co-ordinator, Liberty</i>	31	<b>From exclusion to empowerment: LGBT young people find their voice</b> <i>Jess Wood, Co-founder and Director, Allsorts and Marianne Lemond, Volunteering Development Worker, Allsorts</i>	88
<b>Some issues are too important not to tackle – Raising the achievement of vulnerable children and young people?</b> <i>Clare Tickell, Chief Executive, National Children's Homes</i>	32	<b>Chickenshed – "Theatre that defies theatre" – and education!</b> <i>Paul Morrall, Director of Education and Outreach, Chickenshed</i>	94
<b>Multiculturalism and the gender trap: Young ethnicised women and domestic violence in schools</b>		<b>Book Reviews</b>	101



# EDUCATION JOURNAL

**For professionals in children's services  
and learning at every stage**

THE  
EDUCATION PUBLISHING  
COMPANY LIMITED

Education Publishing Company Ltd, Devonia House, 4 Union Terrace,  
Crediton, Devon, EX17 3DY. Tel: 01363 774455. Fax: 01363 776592.  
Email: [lt@educationpublishing.com](mailto:lt@educationpublishing.com). Web: [www.educationpublishing.com](http://www.educationpublishing.com)

## Preface by Steve Sinnott, General Secretary, National Union of Teachers

Our society places great emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities. If people are to live together harmoniously, they need to value each other's identity and respect diversity. More than ever, teachers and others involved in education need awareness, sensitivity and commitment if they are to foster in young people the skills and expertise they will need in the future.

*Valuing Identity and Diversity* includes a range of articles which illustrate the need to understand complex matters if equality is to be maximised, discrimination minimised and individuals protected in a pluralist society.

We cover a range of equal opportunity issues in this edition of *Education Review* to mark the launch of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). This incorporates the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

This development is a recognition that inequality and discrimination do not neatly separate themselves when they impact on individuals and communities. However, the issues covered in *Valuing Identity and Diversity* provide ample illustration that high levels of research, awareness and expertise continue to be essential in specific areas of inequality. The Government's organisational merger must not lead to either a murkiness of thinking or a hierarchy of equality concerns and actions.

I would like to thank all our contributors.

**Keith Ajegbo**, who led the recent curriculum review for the Secretary of State on identity, diversity and citizenship, suggests how the school curriculum and ethos can support the development of a strong sense of identity in all pupils. In his view, issues of identity and diversity should be addressed across the curriculum; not just in citizenship, humanities and arts lessons.

Taking forward some of the issues raised in the last edition of *Education Review* (*New Directions Home?* which focused on modern childhood) **Bob Reitemeier** and **Zoe Mason** describe The Children's Society's Inquiry into a good childhood. They highlight the dangers to individual children and call for a new vision of childhood.

**Debbie Weeks-Bernard** summarises research for the Runnymede Trust which identifies the role of race in parents' choices of schools for their children. This will have important implications for schools seeking to meet their newly-imposed duty to promote community cohesion.

**Bill Greenshields** highlights the wealth of research that identifies social class as the most fundamental influence on achievement and

wellbeing in our education system. He asks very pertinent questions about why real actions have not developed from the evidence.

**Doug Jewell** expresses concern about the demonisation of young people particularly in parts of the media. Although we value individuality, we, all too often, want others to be all the same and, perhaps, just like ourselves. Doug calls for a wider recognition that young people are developing, individual, human beings capable of both good and bad behaviour with all the complexity that suggests.

Well-being, of both pupils and adults, is an enhanced priority for schools in response to the Government's 'Every Child Matters' agenda. **Clare Tickell** suggests culture change and more support beyond the classroom for vulnerable children and young people to have their needs better met. She highlights looked-after children, or children in care, in drawing out general conclusions that can apply to all children.

Throughout *Valuing Identity and Diversity*, excellent references for further reading and research are provided by our authors. **Heidi Safia Mirza** exemplifies this to the fullest extent at the end of her very thought-provoking article about young women being 'ethnicised' within their own communities and families. She asks whether tolerance and liberalism are appropriate responses when differences in cultural and religious values lead to human rights violations which can become issues in our multi-cultural schools.

**Judy Hutchings** and **Tracey Bywater** highlight the problems and costs for society, as well as for the individuals concerned, if anti-social behaviour in young children is not addressed at an early age. They draw on 30 years of research and current work in Wales to show that some approaches to supporting parents are more effective than others. Again, they provide an extensive list of further reading.

University or not has, perhaps, become a more significant indicator of inequality as a higher proportion of young people go on to higher education. **Rachel Carr** describes a programme, based in London, which encourages disadvantaged young people firstly to aspire to University and then to obtain a place.

Exclusion from school, of course, often becomes a determinant of whether or not pupils complete their school education successfully or not, let alone stay in education afterwards. **Audrey Osler** focuses on the exclusion of girls, including self-exclusion, and looks at the impact this has on girls' sense of belonging, as well as their achievement.

Head teacher, **Allison Crompton**, brings us back to the largest group of 'under-achievers' – white, working class boys. She describes, what she believes, are the crucial factors which have enabled her secondary school in Rochdale to achieve 'outstanding results', despite its location in the 25th most deprived borough in England.

Jess Wood and Marianne Lemond describe a youth project in Brighton and Hove which helps lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people to, “find themselves and see in others like them, reflections of new possibilities for self and their future”. Drawing on quotes from those involved, they describe journeys toward empowered citizenship that should be possible for all young people in a society which genuinely values identity and diversity.

On behalf of Chickenshed, an inclusive theatre company, Paul Morrall includes case studies to illustrate how an inclusive philosophy of theatre and education can bring out the best in all children and young people – including those who, because of their special needs, conventional approaches and settings have failed.

Our book reviewers bring a very high level of expertise and experience to their reviews of new publications available. Two from the wider educational world – former senior HMI, Colin Richards and Jim Wild, convenor of the new ‘Masculinities Unit’ at Nottingham Trent University; two from NUT’s Education and Equal Opportunities Department, Judy Ellerby and Robert Cheesman; and two of the excellent tutors who underpin the NUT’s professional development programme, Mary Hrekow and Peter Hrekow. Together, they make a high quality team of reviewers and I am very grateful to them.

I commend *Valuing Identity and Diversity* to you.

Steve Sundt



# Identity, diversity and citizenship

## Keith Ajegbo

Keith Ajegbo was head teacher of Deptford Green School in Lewisham for 20 years. He retired in July 2006. He led the Curriculum Review for the Secretary of State on Diversity and Citizenship. The report was published January 2007. He was knighted for services to education in the New Year's Honours List.

**Abstract:** *Issues of identity are important to how students feel about themselves in school and in relation to their education and how they feel about what they might become. Drawing on his work for the Curriculum Review on Diversity and Citizenship, Keith Ajegbo looks at the challenges that schools face when trying to provide a curriculum and ethos that give clarity, motivation and a sense of identity for all pupils. He also outlines his thoughts on whether British modern social and cultural history should be the fourth pillar of the citizenship curriculum.*

**T**he Curriculum Review on Diversity and Citizenship was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (2007) because of concerns about the cohesiveness of our society. It followed the terrorist attacks in July 2005 and remarks by Trevor Phillips that as a country “we are sleepwalking to segregation”. What we found was a vast range of practice in schools across the country, ranging from a deep moral commitment by schools to explore identity and culture in the curriculum and ethos of the school because they were preparing pupils for a multi cultural society and a globalised world to schools where these issues seemed low on the agenda.

The essence of our review was to look at two things: i) how issues of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity are explored across the curriculum and ii) whether British modern social and cultural history should be the fourth pillar of the citizenship curriculum. We interpreted this as the tension between multi culturalism as understanding and celebrating difference, and Britishness as celebrating the notion of a national identity. The essence of our report is about how children learn to understand difference but also about how we discuss and debate “living together in the UK”.

Being asked to lead in writing the report had a particular poignancy for me. My background is mixed race, with a Nigerian father and a white mother. Having been born in London just after the war I have lived through

the changes in the ethnic and cultural make up of our society with a perspective just outside the mainstream. By nature of being mixed race, issues of identity had a particular resonance for me. In the 1950s London was a white and Christian world and it seemed that for many people, at least on the surface, definitions of identity and Britishness were straightforward. For me they were issues of constant questioning. Many of our pupils nowadays question their identity. In interviewing a pupil in East London for the report, he defined himself as having parents from the West Indies but really he was African; he was British; he was Christian; he was black but essentially he was from E7 (Newham).

My conviction, backed by some research, is that issues of identity are important to how students feel about themselves in school and in relation to their education and how they feel about what they might become. There are lots of themes currently in education that touch upon individuals and groups and how pupils see themselves and are seen. The issue for schools and teachers is navigating a way through this world in order to make coherent sense of school policies. What are the relationships between citizenship, community cohesion, notions of Britishness and multi-cultural education? How do these terms relate to Every Child Matters and Personalised Education? A big theme running through education at the moment is that education meets the needs of individuals; that these individuals can relate to each other and work together and that students understand both individually and in groups how they fit in to a national and global picture. The relationship of individuals, ethnicities, cultures and religions to their education is, of course, incredibly multi-layered. The challenge for schools is to create coherence out of the tensions and complexities and to build institutions that through their curriculum and ethos provide clarity, motivation and a sense of identity for all pupils.

### **A whole school commitment**

The review revealed a range of responses to that complexity. What made a difference to the school's response was the beliefs and attitudes of the head teacher. Where the head had a moral commitment to exploring what it means for pupils to live in a multi-cultural Britain in an increasingly globalised world the school wrestled with the issues and teachers were freed to develop themes and ideas. In some cases the commitment came from the head; in others the head was convinced by the power of arguments from members of staff and worked with those staff to drive the agenda forward. In a system where schools have increasing autonomy, if the head and senior staff of the school are not committed to exploring issues of cultural identity, then it is unlikely that the pupils will deal with these issues consistently in citizenship or elsewhere in the curriculum.

Training and development of staff through from initial teacher training

to the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers is key to schools being comfortable with diversity. In the report we quote from the Training and Development Agency for schools in 2006, "Only 36 per cent of newly qualified teachers felt their training had been better than satisfactory in equipping them to teach in multi cultural schools". An important aspect of their needs has been highlighted in a recent report by the Historical Association (2007). How do teachers learn to deal productively in the classroom with issues of race and class and conflict in ways that deepen thinking and develop productive argument? We also expressed in the report that in the revision of the NPQH there should be a greater focus on education for diversity and citizenship education as a core component.

There seemed to us to be a particular issue about the relationship of the head teacher and the leadership team to the curriculum in schools. In the report we were clear that diversity education and dealing with issues of identity can be tackled across the curriculum, not just in citizenship. The question often arose about where in the school does responsibility lie for

## **Diversity education and dealing with issues of identity can be tackled across the curriculum, not just in citizenship.**

what happens both horizontally and vertically in terms of planning the curriculum? Without careful planning and oversight it is not possible to take themes like diversity and identity and weave them throughout the

curriculum. There were pupils interviewed who related black history only to black history month and we were very sympathetic to the girl who had studied Harriet Tubman year after year. We were struck in talking to those responsible for developing maths and science teaching about their concern that particular ethnic groups were less likely to study these subjects at level 3. There is evidence that taking maths to that level gives students real advantages in the world of work. We questioned whether this was an issue of identity in terms of how these students saw themselves in relation to the subject. We felt very strongly that issues of identity and diversity should be taken on across the curriculum and not just in the humanities and arts subjects.

### **Localised support**

We also became very aware of how locality can make a difference to how these issues are dealt with in schools. In a multi cultural area diversity is in front of teachers in the classroom. In a largely white or mono cultural minority ethnic school this is not the case. The school in which I was headteacher had a very multi cultural intake in an area that had been home to many cultures and religions over a number of years. The challenges facing us in developing an inclusive culture were far less than the white

working class school on the other side of Lewisham when its intake of black and minority ethnic pupils began to increase. Schools are in different places and this needs to be reflected in the professional development available for teachers and heads. We had evidence that some white teachers in largely white areas sometimes felt ill at ease in dealing with issues that were about other cultures and ways of life with which they were unfamiliar. This is understandable and support and training needs to be customised to their circumstances and good materials and resources need to be made available. Similarly schools in multi-cultural inner city areas, while celebrating diversity, sometimes need to be reminded about the needs of the white pupils in their classrooms. Some of the white pupils we talked to felt invisible when issues of diversity and identity were discussed and celebrated in their schools.

### **British history and the curriculum**

An area of some controversy was the proposal to add the fourth pillar of British modern social and cultural history to the citizenship curriculum. This was interpreted by some as a means of teaching a concept of Britishness in the curriculum. Our take on this is that there is interesting discussion to be had in the classroom about what it means to live together in the UK. Through the discussion there is an opportunity to analyse the multi-layered complexity of what it means to be a citizen of a nation in a world of disappearing boundaries. Our concern, however, was that this discussion should be properly contextualised and, in order for that to happen, it had to be rooted in an understanding of aspects of British history. Those aspects of history we recommended should be studied are those, like the history of immigration, which have had an impact on the issues of citizenship and cohesion that often create headlines today. We believe this history needs to be looked at in relation to the values that Britain stands for. In our classrooms there are many histories to be explored, often telling different stories.

In writing the report we were acutely aware of it being seen as yet another initiative falling on the desk of hard-pressed senior leaders in schools. However, we felt very strongly that these issues should be woven through the ethos of every school and are necessary for pupils to understand themselves in relation to a rapidly changing world. Schools are currently working to revise the Key Stage 3 curriculum with more freedom to devise schemes of work but with more emphasis on diversity. We hope that the guidance for schools “on promoting community cohesion” will be a helpful check on what schools can do to get things in place. Schools are in very different positions in relation to the work they have done and we envisaged our recommendations being planned in over three years.

There were many recommendations in our report but two that we are

working particularly hard to take forward are: i) a school linking project and ii) the setting up of a week for schools next year around the theme of “Who Do We Think We Are?” In Bradford we saw a model of school linking, based on work in the curriculum, which brought together pupils from different ethnicities, cultures and communities whose paths, in the normal course of events, would not have crossed. We were particularly struck by some white children who were excited by their visit to a mosque. They had gone there with their new friends who worshipped in the mosque and this had enabled them to get a sense of the lived experience of a religion. We are working to develop means of extending school linking possibilities across the country. “Who Do You Think We Are” is an idea of involving schools in a week that looks at notions of identity, place and community. What we hope is that during the week schools have the opportunity to reflect on the nature of their school population and their unique school voice; celebrate or launch national and international school links; involve the community and parents in discussion and debate about living together in the UK and highlight work across the school curriculum that impacts on understanding identity and diversity across the UK.

Little of our report is mandatory; most of it relies on asking schools to make a moral commitment to including in their ethos and curriculum issues of identity and diversity in relation to how we live together in Britain. Schools are in different places in all sorts of senses of the word and change does not happen overnight. Our view, however, is that in meeting these challenges learning will be enhanced and a significant step made to ensuring Every Child Matters.

## References

Department for Education and Skills (2007) *Curriculum review: diversity & citizenship*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.

[http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES\\_Diversity\\_&\\_Citizenship.pdf](http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES_Diversity_&_Citizenship.pdf) (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

Historical Association (2007) *Teaching emotive and controversial history 3-19: a report from the Historical Association on the challenges and opportunities for teaching emotive and controversial history 3-19*. London: Historical Association.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RW100.pdf> (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

## Websites

Every Child Matters <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

Personalised Learning <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/> (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

# How society can create the conditions for all children to enjoy a good childhood

***Abstract:** Childhood today is very different from that experienced by previous generations. Whilst many children in the UK enjoy a good childhood, many do not, with increasing levels of anxiety and mental health problems being diagnosed. In this article **Bob Reitemeier** and **Zoe Mason** emphasise the importance of society working together to ensure that all children receive the childhood they deserve. They outline the remit of The Children's Society's Good Childhood Enquiry and how the findings can help shape a new vision of childhood.*

**T**here can be no doubt of the critical need for society to stop and consider what makes for a good childhood in the twenty-first century. Our increasingly complex world means that the childhood experienced by today's children is significantly different from that of previous generations. New technology has led to vast changes in communications and access to information, where the mobile phone and the internet are now largely taken for granted by children. Demographic changes mean that children are growing up in an increasingly diverse society, where black and minority ethnic populations are increasing at a faster rate than in any other age group. Family structures have changed dramatically over the past 50 years, with 23 per cent of children now being raised in lone parent households (Green

---

## **Bob Reitemeier**

Bob Reitemeier is chief executive of The Children's Society

## **Zoe Mason**

Zoe Mason is campaigns and media officer for The Children's Society

*et al*, 2005).

While we should recognise that many children in the UK are enjoying a supportive and positive childhood, many others are not. The UNICEF's 2007 report on children's wellbeing provided the shocking finding that the UK, when compared to 21 rich countries across the world, is the worst place to be a child, (UNICEF, 2007) and this cannot be ignored. We are wealthier than 50 years ago, yet our young people are experiencing increasing levels of anxiety and mental health problems, where one in ten teenagers has a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder (Hagell, 2004).

The Children's Society works with some of the most disadvantaged children in the country, such as refugee children, children in trouble with the law, children with disabilities and children at risk on the streets. These are among the most affected by these issues. (BMA, 2006)

**At all times a child is both a child in the here and now, and a future adult and both of these aspects of childhood need to be nurtured and celebrated.**

Society's understanding of childhood also appears to be clouded by contradictions and uncertainty. On the one hand we see children and young people as vulnerable and in need of support, yet on the other we view them as a threat and dangerous.

And all the while our increasingly complex world means young people are subjected to pressure to achieve, behave and consume like adults at an ever-earlier age.

As a leading children's charity we believe that we have a duty to lead the way in questioning why so many children in the UK are still experiencing poor childhoods. They are neither able to enjoy their present childhood nor develop in order to reach their potential. At all times a child is both a child in the here and now, and a future adult and both of these aspects of childhood need to be nurtured and celebrated. That is why The Children's Society has launched *The Good Childhood Inquiry*, the UK's first independent national inquiry into childhood.

### **Shaping future policy**

Our ambition is that the inquiry will have a far-reaching impact on children's lives in the twenty-first century. Through *The Good Childhood* we will open an inclusive public debate about the nature of childhood today. But creating discussion is only the first step and rather than simply acting as a talk-shop, the inquiry will be evidence-based, it will include the voices and views of children themselves and it will identify existing obstacles, which are preventing children from experiencing a good childhood, and make recommendations for change.

The inquiry's findings will be made available to the public and will be presented in a way which is accessible and relevant to parents, teachers,

community leaders and importantly children and young people themselves. We will take them to the Government and other organisations working with and for children to initiate policy changes that will help create a better world for all children.

### **Looking at the big picture**

If we are to ensure that all children have a positive childhood as well as reach their potential we must consider how childhood is experienced throughout the UK. *The Good Childhood Inquiry's* remit therefore covers each of the four nations and The Children's Society has gathered views and evidence from children, parents and professionals from across the UK.

It is also crucial for us to consider childhood in a holistic manner. Rather than concentrating on one specific area of children's lives the inquiry has six themes: friends, family, learning, lifestyle, health and values. These themes have been designed to provide structure to the inquiry's thinking on childhood:

#### *Friends*

We will look at how children and young people interact with their peers, and what activities and relationships give them pleasure and meaning. We will explore how friends and peers influence their behaviour and aspirations in positive and negative ways, such as bullying.

#### *Family*

We will look at the family, its various forms and circumstances, and the primary relationships and attachments that shape children and young people's lives. We will ask how families can be supported to provide a loving, supportive and stable environment in which children and young people can grow.

#### *Learning*

We will look at the different ways in which children and young people learn, and develop a sense of wonder, alongside the quality and purpose of their education. We will explore how children develop and socialise, how they acquire skills and knowledge and form attitudes and aspirations.

#### *Health*

We will look at children and young people as individuals, focusing on their health, personality and behaviours. We will consider their sense of self and worth, and how they feel about themselves. And we will ask how they can be supported to adopt behaviours that are good for their present and future well-being.

### *Lifestyle*

We will consider children and young people's place in the material world, their growing role as consumers, and the attitudes and values that shape the way they choose to live their lives. We will also consider how new technologies have changed the things that children and young people do, the spaces that they inhabit, and the ways in which they communicate.

### *Values*

We will look at how children and young people form values, beliefs and faith, and find meaning and a sense of purpose in life. We will ask how they view the world and those around them, and how the world views them. We

**Often adults can become overly concerned with focusing on the skills needed to become a "successful" adult, forgetting the importance of allowing children the time and space to enjoy simply being a child.**

will look at their attitudes towards difference, and their acceptance of others. And we will consider how they can be supported to develop a sense

of wonder, and a sense of responsibility for others, and to participate in social, cultural and political life.

The themes were identified through careful consultation with children, young people and adults, through our knowledge of working with children and also by drawing on the expertise of our inquiry panel.

### **Listening to the real experts**

The inquiry's independent panel is made up of 13 leading experts and influencers. Chaired by Professor Judith Dunn of the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London, the panel includes Lord Layard, Emeritus Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics, Sir Al Aynsley-Green, Children's Commissioner for England, Kathy Sylva, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Oxford Department of Educational Studies and Dr Mohammad Abdul Bari, the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The panel will hear from a range of leading academics and influencers. However, if we are to successfully create the conditions for all children to enjoy a good childhood, it is essential that we listen to the real experts on growing up in the UK today – children and young people themselves.

We have already asked 8,000 young people what they think makes for a good childhood. The findings challenge assumptions that today's youth are only interested in material possessions. The two most commonly mentioned words used when asked about a good childhood were "family" and "friends". Young people's comments emphasised topics such as the

“importance of being loved and supported” and “being treated with fairness and respect by others”.

To ensure we hear from as many children and young people as possible we will continue to gather their views until early 2008.

### **Role of education professionals**

Whilst friends and leisure were very important to the young people surveyed, so also was education. A good quality of education was cited by many as one of the key factors of a good childhood. Young people also recognised the importance of their own commitment to working hard and achieving for their future well-being. However, this generally positive picture was balanced by substantial comment about the negative impact of school pressure. Over half (58 per cent) of young people surveyed were worried about their exams at school, and almost half (47 per cent) said they often worried about school work.

There were both positive and negative comments about teachers. Positive comments emphasised support, help and understanding; negative comments tended to refer to pressure at school. Finally there was comment about the importance of wider learning about life and the need for positive role models. These findings throw up some interesting questions for education professionals and the role they can play in creating good childhoods.

### **Friendship matters**

Interestingly, although children and young people cited friends as being the most important aspect of a good childhood, when adults were asked the same question the importance of friendship was rarely mentioned.

These differing responses highlight the need for society to consider the world through the eyes of a child. Often adults can become overly concerned with focusing on the skills needed to become a “successful” adult, forgetting the importance of allowing children the time and space to enjoy simply being a child. If we are to successfully create a vision of childhood for the twenty-first century we need to view childhood as an exercise in “well-being” as well as “well-becoming”.

These findings also pose a question to society about the value we place on childhood friendships. This is a particularly timely question in light of UNICEF’s recent report which revealed that the UK, when compared to 21 other rich countries, does particularly badly in terms of children’s relationships with their peers.

Adults often underestimate the role friends play in childhood yet research shows that early friendships are linked to the development of social and emotional understanding, and to moral sensibility. However, the importance of friendship was recognised by many of the professionals who

responded to *The Good Childhood Inquiry's* national call for evidence.

Several of the submissions by professionals commented on the importance of friendships to children's development, including the value in having friends from diverse backgrounds. The need for children to have space to play where they could set their own agendas was also frequently mentioned.

A number of the submissions were particularly relevant to educational professionals. Friendships play a key supportive role for children starting school, who adjust to the challenges more successfully if they start with a friend, and for those making transitions later in the school years. One submission draws on a survey of 2,527 primary and secondary school children in the north west of England to illustrate how important friendship is to children. When the children were asked what makes them happy at school 63 per cent stated that it was their friends, while 14 per cent said that what made them unhappy at school was falling out with their friends.

In light of these findings, the author observes that it would be interesting to see a re-evaluation of the purpose of education and teacher training in terms of "the ability to promote co-operation and friendship between students".

The issue of bullying is raised in a number of submissions as a major and concerning issue. Several submissions draw attention to the fact that children who are perceived as being "different" are more likely to be involved in bullying, either as victims or bullies. Responses to bullying tend to focus on the role of schools and parents in promoting positive values.

### **Working together to create a new vision for childhood**

Ultimately responsibility for childhood belongs to society as a whole – only by working together will we ensure that all children experience the good childhood they deserve. *The Good Childhood Inquiry* is a chance for society to come together and create a new vision for childhood for the twenty-first century.

To find out more about *The Good Childhood Inquiry* please visit [www.goodchildhood.org.uk](http://www.goodchildhood.org.uk). We will continue to gather comments from children and young people until January 2008 – they can have their say by visiting [www.mylife.uk.com](http://www.mylife.uk.com)

### **References**

Green, H., McGinnity, A., Meltzer, H., Ford, T. and Goodman, R. (2005) *Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain, 2004: a survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Department of Health and*

*Scottish Executive*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/mentalhealth04/MentalHealthChildrenYoungPeople310805\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/mentalhealth04/MentalHealthChildrenYoungPeople310805_PDF.pdf) (Accessed: 18 July 2007)

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2007) *Child poverty in perspective: an overview of child well-being in rich countries: a comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

<http://www.unicef.org/media/files/ChildPovertyReport.pdf> (Accessed: 18 July 2007)

Hagell, A. (2004) *Time-trends in adolescent well-being*. London: Nuffield Foundation.

(The Nuffield Foundation seminars on children and families: evidence and implications)

[http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/fileLibrary/pdf/2004\\_seminars\\_children\\_families\\_adolescents\\_and\\_wellbeing.pdf](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/fileLibrary/pdf/2004_seminars_children_families_adolescents_and_wellbeing.pdf) (Accessed: 18 July 2007)

BMA Board of Science (2006) *Child and adolescent mental health: a guide for healthcare professionals*. London: BMA.

[http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/PDFChildAdolescentMentalHealth/\\$FILE/ChildAdolescentMentalHealth.pdf](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/PDFChildAdolescentMentalHealth/$FILE/ChildAdolescentMentalHealth.pdf) (Accessed: 18 July 2007)

# What is the place of race in the debate about choice?

Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard

Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard is a senior research and policy analyst for the Runnymede Trust.

**Abstract:** *There has been little attention paid to issues of race or ethnicity in parental school choice either in proposed reform or in the debate prompted by it. Debbie Weekes-Bernard outlines her research into the impact that an increase in choice might have on parents and children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. She argues that race plays an integral part in choice citing the example of “white flight” as a way of understanding the way that choice and race are linked. Black and minority ethnic (BME) parents are faced with choices that veer between local schools which sometimes educate pupils where those from one BME group constitute the majority of all children, or schools much further from home in which their children, who may be one of only a few BME children in their classroom or playground, might experience cultural isolation.*

Since November 2005, the Runnymede Trust has been conducting research with black and minority ethnic families, and with teachers and admissions officials across three education authorities to establish what motivates parents to choose schools for their children, and ultimately, to try to examine what might be the place of “race” in the current discourse surrounding choice (Weekes-Bernard, 2007).

The publication of the most recent education White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More Choice for parents and pupils*, (DfES 2005) which focused on, among other things, the necessity of increasing parental

choice as a means of raising standards in schools for all children, prompted much debate about the consequences of such reform. We wanted to explore what the impact of an increase in choice might be for parents and children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds given the specific focus within choice proposals on the benefit such reform could have upon disadvantaged groups.

We have been concerned by what we have found – that essentially very little attention was paid to issues of race or ethnicity in choice either in proposed reform – the education White Paper and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which followed – or in the debate prompted by it.

Plans to increase parental choice included proposals to, for example, expand the numbers and diversity of schools available; to facilitate subsidised transport in order to make it easier for parents and families, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to travel elsewhere to access “good” schools; and to speed up the process of closing down those schools which were failing. However, little research as to the impact of an increased choice system on BME families had been conducted and as such it was not clear how choices were currently made by parents within these groups. Would it not be a little presumptuous to increase choice when we were not clear how specific sectors of society were currently exercising it?

## **Choice for black and minority ethnic parents is not motivated by a desire to self-segregate, despite public worries to the contrary.**

Furthermore, critical and important discussions about choice on political, professional, activist and some parental group levels, then and now, focused on social segregation – the regulation of admissions policies by individual schools outside of authority control and the importance of avoiding selection on the basis of ability, or parental income. However, these elements of debate largely ignored the impact or even presence of race, focusing instead on the increase in social class differentials among pupils and families in terms of access to good schooling and achievement.

What our research has shown is that race actually plays a fairly integral part in choice – that black and minority ethnic parents are faced with sets of choices that veer between local schools which sometimes educate pupils where those from one BME group constitute the majority of all children, or schools much further from home in which their children, who may be one of only a few BME children in their classroom or playground, might experience cultural isolation. And we need only think about the phenomenon of “white flight”, involving families leaving an area in order to access better housing and good schools and the impact that such flight has upon the ethnic make-up of the areas and the local schools that they

have left behind, in order to understand the way that choice and race are inextricably linked.

Importantly we noted that choice for black and minority ethnic parents is not motivated by a desire to self-segregate, despite public worries to the contrary and though our research talks about the relationship between choice and ethnic segregation it does not imply that BME families wish to live apart from others. Rather, choice for these families is complex and the nature of this complexity suggests that we need to re-think the way we understand concepts such as local schooling and pupil mix and incorporate within our definitions the impact of ethnicity.

### Re-thinking concepts

We spoke to BME parents from a range of socio-economic backgrounds finding some who were more “connected” to their local environments than “aspirant” others who, though often similarly physically restricted to the catchment areas in which they lived, sought to move beyond those restrictions, often in spite of their inability to do so financially. They told us that their choices were motivated by a wish to avoid minority pupil underachievement, to protect religious identity, to enable safety and security, and to remain, in some cases, connected to a local environment in which education plays a small part in comparison to general access to wider services. Choosing local schools for some parents on lower incomes reflected ease in terms of their lack of access to private transport, or the size of their families, but also signified security and safety, enabling them to keep an eye out for children who might possibly be at risk.

One such school had a particularly problematic reputation within the local area and was known as a “default school” by some parents, but was chosen by others we consulted in spite of this, who distanced both themselves and their children from these rumours as a means of rationalising their choices. It has been established that the effect of “demonising” local schools can be far reaching for the pupils who attend them (Reay, 2004). In our research, BME parents who were aware of the numbers of pupils who were engaging in criminal activity, both in and around this particular local school, sought simply to balance safety against the risk posed by this wider knowledge. For their children, however, the developing of deep senses of anxiety in the realisation that their new secondary school was indeed one of those subject to the local rumour-mill was prevalent.

“Pupil 1 *[Northfields High] doesn't look very nice inside and some of the kids that get on the bus that I catch home, they are not very polite at all. . . . they set fires on the bus.*

Pupil 2 *And some of them spit on people.*

Pupil 3 *It's just really untidy, the kids are free to do whatever they want.*

Pupil 4 *Someone got stabbed.*

Pupil 5 *With a potato peeler.*

*I have to go to [Northfields High] because my sister goes there but I'm a little scared because of the stabbings and stuff that's been happening. . . I do want to go because it's close to my house and I don't want my mum and dad to have to have trouble to pick me up from a long distance." (Year 6 pupils, Northfields Hall Primary)*

For other parents, local schools perceived as being ethnically segregated were to be avoided, but not simply on the basis of pupil mix. These were seen as schools that had been largely abandoned, not just by other parents, but generally by teaching staff and the local education authority, as they were schools with high teacher turnover, low academic results and high numbers of casual pupil entries. These parents wished to avoid the risk of pupil underachievement, an occurrence that clearly affects high proportions of children from some minority ethnic communities more so than others, and were willing to balance such risk avoidance against the possibility that their child may experience racism in a school in which he or she was part of a clear minority.

*"[You are] trying to get your child to stay away from certain types of children . . . some of these are black. So you find yourself in this really weird situation where you are staying black and true to yourself, but you are trying to get your child out of a black environment and into a white environment that you know they are going to struggle in anyway. But you know they are going to have a better education. As adults [we] battle in our ethnicity [but] we put our children in a battle as well."*

(African Caribbean mother, Inner London)

More importantly though, aspirant, relatively articulate BME parents were making political choices when avoiding local black and Asian majority schools.

*"We've had run-ins with Northtown Catholic Primary. Northtown Catholic is a school that started off with more white kids than black. Now it's got more black kids than white and we've had "Black Pupil Awards" in this city for like 10 years and they've never nominated a child. So that's one school where I think they should be doing something positive for the black kids but they don't. It's acknowledging that they're there and that they've got a history and a culture and everything. By just ignoring it, to me, is racism. And they can't see it."*

(African Caribbean parent, Northern England)

*"One of the things that mainstream schools can do, and all schools have this choice [is] it's perfectly fine in Muslim majority schools for Arabic to be taught as a second*

*language. Why is that not happening in Muslim majority schools?"*  
(Muslim parent, East of England)

It was not simply requesting a school to promote actively the minority ethnic and/or religious identities of the vast majority of their student population that informed these parents' rejection of ethnically segregated schools, but the reluctance within those schools to acknowledge the very existence of these identities and indeed the changing nature of their pupil population

These findings throw up a set of issues that not only reinforce the general criticisms we are now familiar with, about the lack of real choice that parents are able to exercise when it comes to education, but that also highlight far wider issues, about pupil distribution, about cohesion and the primacy of ethnic and faith identities for parents and their children.

That these issues were not part of public debate illustrates that policy in this area is partial. Ascertaining the likely impact of far reaching policy ideas on all sectors of society is essential. If black and minority ethnic parents and their children tell us about issues to do with ethnic segregation that do not feature in public debate then they clearly will not benefit from reform in the way that it is intended.

The provision of good local schooling for all is clearly essential in order to address the scramble for places that occurs annually among parents and

**Choosing local schools ... signified security and safety, enabling them to keep an eye out for children who might possibly be at risk.**

children and rectify the inequitable educational outcomes experienced by pupils attending the schools that have largely been rejected by others. What our research suggests is that

understanding the impact of race upon policy development in this area affects the way we think about issues such as local schooling and pupil mix. Localities and the schools they serve need to be seen as safe and not dangerous for the families who live within them and should be both cohesive and ethnically supportive. This goes beyond simply looking at the creation of socially segregated schools and areas towards looking at the ethnic make-up of these locations.

There are also sets of very important questions that need to be addressed at the level of policy and public debate which relate to the issue of ethnic segregation, one of which is the educational experiences of BME children being educated in ethnically segregated schools, whether these are black or Asian majority or schools in which BME children are one of very few like them. Is it possible to have successful ethnically segregated schools and if so, how do we determine what constitutes "success"? Should success relate solely to academic achievement, and the chasing of the A-C

economy (Gillborn and Youdell, 2002) which drives many schools and the parents who seek entry for their children to them? Or should schools be judged on the way cohesion is promoted and children encouraged to learn about ethnic and religious diversity?

*“Perhaps therefore we should be more concerned with the experience of schooling as something in its own right, and not always for something at a later date (qualification, participation, employment and so on). Perhaps the school mix is the school effect, affecting pupils’ views of school, and therefore of later educational opportunities but also affecting their notions of social justice in the present. And perhaps it is this that is most at risk from some of the proposed changes to school organization presented in the Schools White Paper.”*

Gorard, (2006)

## References

- Department for Education and Standards (2005) *Higher standards, better schools for all: more choice for parents and pupils*. London: TSO. (Cm 6677)  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/schoolswhitepaper/pdfs/DfES-Schools%20White%20Paper.pdf> (Accessed: 19 July 2007)
- Gillborn, D and Youdell, D (2002) *Rationing education: policy, practice, reform and equity*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Gorard, S (2006) ‘The impact of school diversity’, in: Hewlett, M. (Ed.) Pring, R. (Ed.) and Tulloch, M. (Ed.) *Comprehensive education: evolution, achievement and new directions*. Northampton: The University of Northampton Press, pp. 63-70.
- Reay, D (2004) ‘Mostly roughs and toughs’: social class, race and representation in inner city schooling. *Sociology*, vol. 38 no. 5, pp. 1005-1023.
- Weekes-Bernard, D. (2007) *School choice and ethnic segregation - educational decision-making among Black and minority ethnic parents*. London: Runnymede Trust.  
<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/School%20ChoiceFINAL.pdf> (Accessed: 19 July 2007)

# Educational achievement and social class

## Bill Greenshields

Bill Greenshields is Vice President of the National Union of Teachers. He writes in a personal capacity.

**Abstract:** *Bill Greenshields outlines the link between educational achievement and social class which has been chronicled over the last century but sadly remains just as strong for today's children and young people. Despite the pronouncements of governments, little has changed and schools and teachers find themselves blamed for failing to redress the balance when so many factors beyond their control influence the attainments and aspirations of their pupils. The article calls for teachers to have a concerted voice in trying to address the class issues which impact on society.*

*"The hereditary curse upon English education is its organisation along lines of social class . . . . the barbarous association of differences of educational opportunities with distinctions of wealth and social position." (Tawney, 1931)*

**B**asil Fawltly famously suggested that there should be a Mastermind specialist subject – "Stating The Bleeding Obvious". One of the questions in such a category would surely be concerned with the link between educational achievement and social class. Despite studies, surveys, investigations and replicated research going back over the last half century - showing conclusively that the major determinant of educational achievement is the social class background of pupils – it *still* makes relatively good headlines when the same thing is proved *yet again* by new research.

As I write this in September 2007, there is another example of "new old news" in *The Times Educational Supplement*, which reveals, again:

*"Social class and poverty are much greater causes of academic underachievement than gender... according to the Government's Equality watchdog, the Equal*

*Opportunities Commission*". (Bloom, 2007)

### **A personal commentary**

Let's not go back too far, or even attempt a complete list.

I am now in my mid 50s. While I was at primary school, I was blissfully unaware of Hoggart's work, *The uses of literacy*. (Hoggart, 1957) When I was preparing for life at my grammar school in 1962, Jackson and Marsden produced *Education and the working class*. Soon after, the Newsom Report, *Half Our Future* (Central Advisory Council for Education (England), 1963) noted that the conditions and social problems of slum areas were leading to under-stimulation and underachievement of children.

As I started GCE O level studies, Douglas reported the effects of social class on education in *The home and the school*, (Douglas, 1964) which was reinforced by his later work, *All Our Future*, (Douglas, Ross and Simpson, 1968) which coincided with my entry to the sixth form. Part of my A level sociology course was to understand the *National Child Development Study* – a longitudinal study, tracking individuals born in 1958 (Pringle, 1966). This again demonstrated the determining factor of class in educational progress and attainment. *Social relations in a secondary school* came to similar conclusions based on observations in a boys' secondary modern school in Salford (Hargreaves, 1967).

## **The daily direct and devastating effects of social and economic inequality in Britain are not just on the pages of the research reports – they are in front of us daily.**

As I went to Central London Polytechnic to further study sociology, Bernstein was working on *Class, codes and control*, in which he made clear the devastating linguistic disadvantages faced by many working class children (Bernstein et al, 1975, 1973, 1971).

And just after I started teaching in a secondary modern school in 1975, Bourdieu in his work on cultural and social reproduction – a Marxist analysis of stratification in schools and society as a whole – revealed the determining factor of class on educational progress and attainment, which matched very closely my experiences as a new teacher (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Sharp and Green maintained that even well intentioned "progressive" developments – such as child-centred education – in fact could not overcome conditions external to the school (Sharp and Green, 1975).

Five years into my teaching, *Origins and Destinations* clearly identified social class background as the major determinant of individuals' access to educational institutions (Halsey, Health and Ridge, 1980). As my career

developed there were many, many more investigations, studies and published research, and each time, the conclusions – though differing in emphasis and focus – were much the same. The division of society on class lines, and consequent deprivation, material and social, has had, is continuing to have, and will continue to have devastating effects on the progress and attainment of working class children.

### **The evidence continues to stack up**

Let's come up to date. Consider this, published towards the end of 2006, referring to the earlier work of Leon Feinstein of University College London:

*"The research shows how it is possible to combine socio-economic classification of the household with the child's overall developmental score at age 22 months to accurately predict educational qualifications at the age of 26 years. . . . By the age of 22 months, children's developmental score is already stratified by social class, and this stratification has increased significantly by the age of 10 years". (Evans, 2006)*

And how about this reported in *The Guardian*:

*"A study by academics at University College London (UCL) and Kings College London has given statistical backbone to the view that the overwhelming factor in how well children do is not what type of school they attend – but social class. This unprecedented project has revealed that a child's social background is the crucial factor in academic performance, and that a school's success is based not on its teachers, the way it is run, or what type of school it is, but, overwhelmingly, on the class background of its pupils". (Taylor, 2006)*

Recently published research commissioned by the Joseph Rowntee Foundation explored the situation in Britain between 1968 and 2005. The research team summed up their conclusions like this:

*"It is clear that the last two and a half decades have witnessed substantial increases in the spatial segregation and concentration of poverty and wealth in Britain. The overall decline and slight spatial deconcentration in core poor households in the 1990s are hopeful signs. However, the 1990s also saw relative poverty levels climb to unprecedented levels of more than one in four households by 2000, and for the first time there were some areas where more than half of all households were poor. Wealthy households have become more segregated, and increasingly concentrated in the south east of England." (Dorling, Rigby, Wheeler, Ballas, Thomas, Fahmy, Gordon and Lupton, 2007)*

Similar work, undertaken by Professor Richard Wilkinson of Nottingham University, looking at the effect of such a widening “wealth/poverty gap”, concluded that the effects were damaging to social cohesion, that growing class inequality... not simply poverty... creates conditions which lead increasingly to social breakdown – in terms of education, crime, “gang culture” etc. The consequences for schools and education – and particularly educational attainment of working class children are obvious (Wilkinson, 1994).

### Government agenda

So are we all agreed then? It might appear so if we consider the following two statements, which clearly reflect the research:

*“We also fail our most disadvantaged children and young people... internationally, our rate of child poverty is still high, as are the rates of worklessness in one-parent families, the rate of teenage pregnancy and the level of poor diet amongst children. The links between poor health, disadvantage and low education outcomes are stark.”* (Dept for Education and Skills, 2004)

*“All the independent evidence shows overall standards to be rising. But the bad news is that when it comes to the link between educational achievement and social class, Britain is at the bottom of the league for industrialised countries... ”*

*“Four factors are key to this depressing pattern. First the simple fact of growing up in poverty, with the restrictions it places on housing, diet and lifestyle. Second, family factors – critically parental interest and support, which itself is driven by parental experience of education. Third, neighbourhood factors. The fourth is the quality of schooling”.*

*“The first three require long-term change in social and economic life. But the great power of schooling is that it is in our power to change it now and change it for the better.”* (David Miliband, Schools Minister to an IPPR conference on social mobility quoting work by the National Literacy Trust (2003))

But we have to ask, if “*the first three require long-term change in social and economic life*”... where is the action on this? In fact, as the Rowntree report shows, the situation has worsened considerably since Miliband’s statement – with 100,000 more children living in poverty last year – bringing the total to 3.8 million. In addition to this growth in poverty, the wealth gap has widened.

The sad fact is that governments – Tory and Labour – have attempted to turn the issue on its head, and – far from attacking class disadvantage, prioritising anti-poverty measures, pursuing a redistribution of wealth, simply seek to ‘blame’ the education system, teachers and other public sector workers for continuing inequalities, for lack of “social mobility” and social cohesion!

They 'recognise' the link between class and education, but – flying in the face of the research – maintain it is poor education, and lack of skills that *create* class inequality and disadvantage rather than vice versa.

Many will remember the outspoken David Blunkett, when Secretary of State, alleging that teachers, "Use the question of class disadvantage to justify failing our children". This is like recognising the devastating effects of poor housing and sanitation on people's health, and then blaming hospitals and doctors, struggling against the effects, for the continued existence of such ills! It is not schools, good, bad or indifferent that create class inequality – it is class inequalities in terms of wealth and power that lead to the disaffection of pupils. This is the reality shown by decades of research.

### **Lack of action on poverty – and impact on education**

If the research is so conclusive – and if teachers' experiences in the classroom bear it out every day... why is there no action against poverty and class disadvantage?

Consider these statistics: (HM Revenue and Customs, 2006)

- The richest 1 per cent of the UK population own 34 per cent of the total wealth;
- the richest 5 per cent own 58 per cent;
- the richest 10 per cent own 71 per cent;
- ...and the poorest 50 per cent of the population own just 1 per cent of the total wealth.

As we have already seen, this gap is widening, and the process is accelerating.

The daily direct and devastating effects of social and economic inequality in Britain are not just on the pages of the research reports – they are in front of us daily in our classrooms, in our hospitals, in our jails and on the streets of our cities, and amongst those subject to rural poverty too.

Teachers have a responsibility here. What can we do?

Firstly, we have to do away with the notion that education *in itself* can put the matter right. Of course, professionally as teachers and school managers, we can and must do all we can to raise pupils' aspirations, motivation and achievement. But the problem at root is in our wider society. It is in a system which relies on the existence of 'have-nots' in order that the 'haves' can have more than their share – a LOT more than their share! Education structures continue to mirror this. How would society work if every child had the sort of education that the economic elite of the nation buys for their children? From where would come those who build their homes, deliver their post, tarmac their roads, load their lorries, stack their shelves, staff their offices, and fight their wars?

So the unpalatable and politically unpopular fact is, in my view, that educational underachievement, far from being an economic *problem* for our free-market, dog-eat-dog society, is, in fact, an economic necessity that government feels unable or unwilling to challenge. If it is money that makes the world go round, it is inequality in wealth and power that keeps it turning in the way we have come to accept as "normal". Yet the word and concept of "underachievement" is politically damaging to government. So it must be continually cloaked in new words and "spun" concepts – while the cause continues to go unchallenged

Now, the Government strategy – including the Education and Inspections Act – will impose on us new 'legitimacy' in terms of social engineering and division. We'll see "skills academies" and specialist vocational schools for what they call "disaffected" pupils, and academic schools for those more "motivated" by such education. And, of course, it will be the latter that are populated by the children of those at the top of the social and economic pyramid – and it will be the qualifications that they offer that will keep their offspring there.

## **It is not schools, good, bad or indifferent that create class inequality.**

Meanwhile, working class children will be encouraged to succeed at other challenges – challenges which even if tackled successfully will never equip them to move into that elite. The much vaunted increase in numbers in higher education has seen a promotion of 'vocational' routes largely for working class students – and student fees and postgraduate debt are again discouraging working class young people from staying on.

Of course there are exceptions, many exceptions, every year. But against the general story, these are small numbers indeed.

In my view, we teachers need to be part of a wider movement that rejects the fundamental inequalities of society, rejects the social mechanisms that sustain that inequality, and works strategically against these. The vast majority of teachers are trade union members and therefore part of that movement already. At TUC 2007 teacher unions worked together and with organisations such as End Child Poverty and the Unemployed Workers Centres to highlight the issue. In the National Union of Teachers, we need to build on this as a keystone of our core education policy document, *Bringing down the barriers*. (National Union of Teachers, 2004)

I would like to see all teachers' unions commission a definitive work on social class and education, not to repeat what has already been done, but to build on it. What is the nature of our class system today? What is the condition of the English and Welsh working class? How do these

conditions impact on education? What steps could be taken to put an end to the class system, and to the social and economic inequality it represents? What and who might prevent these steps being taken? How can we overcome these?

Some teachers might regard this sort of endeavour as being too political. But it is often these very teachers who work long and hard – often too long and hard for their own health – to raise the aspirations and achievement of the underachieving children in their classroom. Their commitment and work is a very fine thing, but despite generations of such teachers, the problems remain.

All the evidence is that the solution is very largely outside of the classroom. The solution is one based on social progress, on progressive policies that challenge the “global market”, the power of money and privilege – and such policies do not come about without a bit of a struggle.

My view is that we teachers owe it to ourselves, the children and the communities we serve to be at the forefront of that struggle. Though the solution lies outside of our classrooms and schools, our schools are at the hearts of our communities – and it is our communities that need to be inspired to believe that “another world is possible” and that it can be achieved. We can be an important part of that social process of change. Without it, the fundamental problem, and the research mapping its effects, will continue.

## **References**

- Bernstein, B. et al (1975) *Class, codes and control. Vol. 3, Towards a theory of educational transmissions*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bernstein, B. et al. (1973) *Class, codes and control. Vol. 2, Applied studies towards a sociology of language*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bernstein, B. et al (1971) *Class, codes and control. Vol. 1, Theoretical studies towards a sociology of language*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bloom, A. (2007) Beware: targeting by sex can backfire. *Times Educational Supplement*, 14 September, pp.6.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. (1977) *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage.
- Central Advisory Council for Education (England) (1963) *Half our future: a report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)* London: HMSO. (Newsom Report)
- Department for Education and Skills (2004) Department for Education and Skills: five-year strategy for children and learners: putting people at the heart of public services. Cm 6272. London: TSO. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/5yearstrategy/docs/DfES5Yearstrategy.pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2007)
- Dorling, D., Rigby, J., Wheeler, B., Ballas, D., Thomas, B., Fahmy, E., Gordon, D.

- and Lupton, R. (2007) *Poverty, wealth and place in Britain, 1968 to 2005*. Bristol: Policy Press.  
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2019-poverty-wealth-place.pdf>  
 (Accessed: 21 September 2007)
- Douglas, J.W.B. (1964) *The home and the school: a study of ability and attainment in the primary school*. London: MacGibbon & Kee.
- Douglas, J.W.B., Ross, J.M. and Simpson, H.R. (1968) *All our future: a longitudinal study of secondary education*. London: Peter Davies.
- Evans, G. *Educational failure and working class white children in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Halsey, A.H., Heath, A.F. and Ridge, J.M. (1980) *Origins and destinations: family, class and education in modern Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hargreaves, D.H. (1967) *Social relations in a secondary school*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- HM Revenue & Customs (2006) *Share of wealth*. The Internet: Office of National Statistics. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=2>  
 (Accessed: 21 September 2007)
- Hoggart, R. (1957) *The uses of literacy: aspects of working-class life with special reference to publications and entertainments*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Jackson, B. and Marsden, D. (1962) *Education and the working class: some general themes raised by a study of 88 working-class children in a northern industrial city*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- National Literacy Trust (2003) *Class still counts in Britain*. Internet: National Literacy Trust. <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/socialinclusion/social-exclusion.html#counts> (Accessed: 24 September 2007)
- National Union of Teachers (2004) *Bringing down the barriers: NUT education statement*. London: National Union of Teachers. <http://www.teachers.org.uk/resources/pdf/Nut-EducationStatement.FE.pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2007)
- Pringle, M. L. Kellmer (1966) *11,000 seven-year olds: first report of the National Child Development Study (1958 Cohort) submitted to the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), April 1966*. London: Longmans
- Sharp, R. and Green, A. (1975) *Education and social control: a study in progressive primary education*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Tawney, R.H. (1931) *Equality*. 2nd. rev. ed. London: Allen & Unwin. (Halley Stewart Lectures ; 1929)
- Taylor, M. (2006) It's official: class matters: a major new study shows that social background determines pupils' success. Does it mean that the government is heading in the wrong direction? *Guardian Education*, 28 February, p.1. <http://education.guardian.co.uk/policy/story/0,,1719124,00.html> (Accessed: 21 September 2007)
- Wilkinson, R.G. (1994) *Unfair shares: the effects of widening income on the welfare of the young*. Ilford: Barnardos.

# REFRESH AND RENEW YOUR 'BEHAVIOUR' LEADERSHIP SKILLS

## 'Leading Behaviour Improvement'

**LEAD TUTOR: ROB LONG**, Education Works

At STOKE ROCHFORD, the NUT's Education and Training Centre,  
nr Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG33 5EJ

*(This high quality venue is easily accessible from the A1 and has free parking. Free taxis can be arranged for those travelling via Grantham Station [15 minutes]).*

**tt55 Initial Seminar: Thursday 1 and Friday, 2 November 2007**

AND

**Follow-up: Friday, 18 January 2008**

---

**OR: Repeat tt58: Monday, 10 and Tuesday, 11 March 2008**

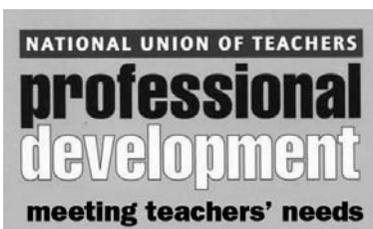
plus **Wednesday 11 June 2008**

---

- Initial seminars start at 11.00 a.m. on day 1 and end at 2.45 p.m. on next. Dinner plus B&B is provided.
- Follow-up seminars 10.30 a.m. to 3.45 p.m. These are non-residential, but participants with more than 1½ hour journey to/from Stoke Rochford can request accommodation on night before.

**COST:** £75 (NUT members); £150.00 (others). Cost includes all three seminar days, VAT, all meals, refreshments, plus one night's dinner plus B&B during initial seminar.

**TO APPLY:** Tel: 0207 380 4719 : email [nutcpd@nut.org.uk](mailto:nutcpd@nut.org.uk); visit [www.teachers.org.uk/cpd](http://www.teachers.org.uk/cpd) (choose: teacherstogether)



# “Troublous times”: Perceptions, myths and the dangers of demonising young people

**Doug Jewell**

Doug Jewell is campaigns co-ordinator for the human rights group, Liberty.

**Abstract:** *Difference in age, like race, faith, physique, gender or sexuality, etc, is either interesting or nothing special or irritating or positively threatening – depending on your state of mind and point of view. In this article **Doug Jewell** discusses the dangers of holding stereotypical views about young people and argues that it should be as unacceptable to demonise young people in the media and in society in general as it is to demonise people on the basis of their ethnic background or sexuality.*

*“The world is passing through troublous times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they knew everything, and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them.”*

**B**elieve it or not this lament comes not from a Government minister launching the latest respect action plan or a tabloid editorial set beside a photograph of hooded youths lurking in an urban wasteland. The quotation is in fact from Peter the Hermit and was written in AD 1274; proof that even 900 years ago some adults were all too willing to lump all young people into a single category and label it “trouble”.

The familiar ring to these sentiments suggests that they are still

widespread; the purpose of this article is to examine if this is indeed the case and, if it is, to assess its impact on inter-generational relations.

The first question to ask, however, is: are perceptions of young people in and of themselves important? Liberty thinks they are, especially at the moment, because, as readers of this journal will be aware, we as a society are currently engaged in a particularly sharp debate about the nature of childhood in our modern world; with some famously describing modern childhood as “toxic”. One of the most important factors shaping this debate is the perceptions held of young people: how are young people regarded and how do they regard themselves?

### **Stereotypical views and intergenerational relations**

Of course no one person's perception of young people will be identical to another's; but Liberty has noted that there are some dominant themes which continually recur. On the one hand many commentators have noted a trend recently for views very similar to Peter the Hermit's to resurface. There are undoubtedly some spectacular examples of inappropriate language being employed in order to gain political advantage or sell newspapers.

For example, Liam Byrne, when he was seeking election to the House of Commons in 2004, pledged in one of his election leaflets to: “Smash Teen Gangs. I'm on your side and together we can deal with the teen gangs. I'm sorry to say that the Liberal Democrats don't quite see it that way. They talk about “rights” for the youths and not taking any action until they've committed a crime. What nonsense – it's too late by then. Only Labour has the guts to deal with teen gangs.” Because of, or perhaps despite, using such language Mr Byrne was elected and is at the time of writing, a Home Office minister.

Similarly, occasional statements from Tony Blair when he was Prime Minister seemed to suggest that some children were almost pre-destined to be problematic and that intervention to try and correct this should begin before birth (Glendinning, 2006). It would be a shame if we had moved from Locke's theory of the human mind as a blank slate to one on which a terrible end had already been written.

On the other hand we can also identify another trend, one where young people are perfect innocents to be protected from a cruel and threatening world. For example when Philomena McCann, aunt of four year old Madeleine McCann who had been so horribly abducted in Portugal whilst on a family holiday, visited Parliament MPs were understandably moved, most sported yellow ribbons in support and there were many statements made pledging support for efforts to find Madeleine.

As heartfelt and correct as these sentiments are, and taking into account the importance of child protection, there is clearly a tendency for

this issue to give us an image of young people as little angels in need of constant and total protection. Taken with the demonising tendency we then arrive at a situation where young people are either little angels or monstrous anti-social devils, and it is not just amongst politicians that this view can be seen.

Sections of the media also share it, with newspapers being particularly susceptible. Articles by columnists such as Melanie Phillips regularly discuss “feral Britain” (Phillips, 2007) with its uncaring yobbish young whilst their papers also promote the idea of the perfect children whose “fear of killers” is ruining their childhoods (*Daily Mail*, 2007).

### **Negative perceptions and policy making**

Most people would accept that such stereotypical views of young people do exist but might question how important they are; after all newspapers need to sell and politicians need coverage for their views. It is Liberty’s belief, however, that this view is not only wrong but actually very damaging for intergenerational relations and consequently societal cohesion.

We believe this to be especially true in a situation where politicians holding such stereotypical views are directly involved in decision making, the media enjoys a position where it can influence policy making and yet young people themselves are still by and large excluded from discussions

## **It would be a shame if we had moved from Locke’s theory of the human mind as a blank slate to one on which a terrible end had already been written.**

around the policies which directly affect them.

We believe this opens us to the possibility of wrong policies being developed to deal with the stereotype and not the reality, and one recent example of this might be the development and use of the Mosquito device. The Mosquito emits a high pitched noise that is extremely unpleasant but can only usually be heard by people under the age of 20. It is deployed mainly outside of shops and is designed to drive young people away from an area whether or not they are engaged in any criminal actions or are even causing a nuisance. Can anyone imagine such a device being deployed if it only affected people from a single ethnic group or gender?

In contrast to the simplistic view of young people as angels or devils, Liberty believes that age is just one of numerous badges of difference amongst human beings. Difference in age, like race, faith, physique, gender or sexuality, etc, is either interesting or nothing special or irritating or positively threatening – depending on your state of mind and point of view.

There are clearly moments in the history of societies when people can become so intolerant of difference, so fearful of “the other”, that they would scapegoat their own shadows if they could pin them down. At such a moment, children and young people – as an obvious disenfranchised minority, without political, financial or physical power, inevitably lose out, but so do adults and the whole of society, by squandering the future.

Liberty does not believe that we have come to such a crisis point in Britain in 2007. But the danger is far too close for comfort when every day is filled with another political speech or media commentary denigrating young people.

However, we should also note at this stage that the view of young people as either angels or devils is far from universal. Even Louise Casey, the Government’s Co-ordinator for Respect, said when launching a phase of the Respect Action Agenda on 4 April 2007: “Promoting good behaviour and challenging bad is a key theme of the Respect Action Plan. Children are too often criticised for their attitude, when in fact the vast majority know how to behave and recognise the bad behaviour of others, young and old alike”.

We also know from research that Liberty has done that attitudes to young people might be affected by negative perceptions fostered by some politicians and sections of the media but they are not determined by them. We also know that negative stereotypes are not as important as people’s own experiences.

In a recent survey YouGov conducted on Liberty’s behalf, 38 per cent of people in the UK disagreed with the statement: “the young people of today are a real problem for society”. However this rose to 65 per cent when asked if they disagreed with the statement: “the young people I know, my children, neighbours or relatives, are a real problem for society”. Most tellingly of all when asked if: “some politicians blame young people for society’s problems because it is easier than finding solutions” 71 per cent agreed.

We think this shows that most people are worried by a growing gap between the generations, but have faith in the young people they actually know. Most of all it shows that the constant stream of comment from politicians about “troubled times” has a hollow ring.

### **A new approach**

So, if the angels or devils view is to be dispensed with, are there other frames of reference that can help? For Liberty there is, and it is one based on the recognition that young people are developing, individual, human beings capable of both good and bad behaviour, with all the complexity that suggests.

For us this frame of reference is the human rights framework which

recognises that the values of dignity, equal treatment and fairness benefit everyone and are essential to the survival of a democratic society and that it is in the context of young people that they are best demonstrated.

This is because rights for young people, like human rights in general, are as much about fairness as protection, as much about protection as liberty, as much about liberty as equality of esteem. It may not be as simple a framework as one dealing in stereotypes but it does allow us to relate to each other as individual human beings and negotiate our difference and diversity.

I should note here that the UK Government is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and so is a subscriber to its view of childhood, one which is absolutely in accordance with, and indeed informs, Liberty's. In particular the commitments in Article 3 (1) and Article 29 (1) outline a coherent and useful way to understand the complexities of childhood and how to deal with it (Article 3 and Article 29).

They argue that in all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. They also clearly state that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's

**There are clearly moments in the history of societies when people can become so intolerant of difference, so fearful of "the other", that they would scapegoat their own shadows if they could pin them down.**

personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; and the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

In short this framework is exactly one which understands the complex reality of young people's lives, and in 2007 the UK Government will have to report to the United Nations on how it is implementing this convention. We hope it will use the opportunity to assess its policies according to the values and aspirations of the convention and to change those, such as detaining children seeking asylum, which are incompatible.

We also hope they take this opportunity to examine their own perceptions. In the Spring 2007 issue of *Education Review*, Patrick Alexander expressed the need to "recognise complexity (in the debate about modern childhood) rather than adopt a simplistic, negative perspective that measures the corruption of modern childhood against an essentially

nostalgic vision of what “childhood” used to be”<sup>1</sup>. The same can be said about current perceptions of young people themselves. Whilst sections of the media and the political elite continue to promote views of young people that either demonise an entire generation or perpetuate a myth of angelic children in need of protection from the evils of the modern world, developing a proper dialogue between the generations will be difficult.

As I have shown, Liberty believes that, of course, young people are neither demons nor angels. Rather young people are developing individual human beings, with all the complications this implies. We believe that if we, as a society, could adopt this view, which is hardly revolutionary or breathtaking in its originality, take the values of the convention to heart and promote them as societal values, it would become as unacceptable to demonise young people in the media and in society in general as it is to demonise people on the basis of their ethnic background or sexuality.

Surely this would be a big step forward in establishing ways in which we can provide, as a society, young people with the support and resources they need to develop and fulfil their potential.

## **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Article 3

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 29 General comment on its implementation

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

The full text of the Convention can be found at: United Nations. Commission on Human Rights (1991) Convention on the rights of the child: adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989: entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49. New York: United Nations. <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf> (Accessed: 23 July 2007)

## References

- Fear of killers 'ruining childhood' (2007), *Daily Mail*, 12 February, [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in\\_article\\_id=435560&in\\_page\\_id=1770](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=435560&in_page_id=1770) (Accessed: 19 July 2007)
- Education Review*, Vol 20 no 1. Spring 2007. Page 58.
- Glendinning, L. (2006) We can clamp down on antisocial children before birth, says Blair. *The Guardian*, 1 September. <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/homeaffairs/story/0,,1862706,00.html> (Accessed: 19 July 2007)
- Phillips, M. (2007) Feral Britain. *Daily Mail*, 23 April. <http://www.melaniephillips.com/articles-new/?p=503> (Accessed: 19 July 2007)

# Some issues are too important not to tackle – raising the achievement of vulnerable children and young people

Clare Tickell

Clare Tickell is chief executive, National Children's Homes

***Abstract:** While the Government has spent a great deal of resources and not an inconsiderable amount of policy and legislative time on the educational outcomes of vulnerable groups, this article suggests a more radical approach to reform resulting in a culture change and policies beyond the classroom. The issue of looked after children – or children in care – is used as an example of an area where what is already known to work can be used to draw out more general conclusions that apply to all children. These conclusions include the need to celebrate achievement rather than measure attainment, acknowledge the appropriate role of targeted resources and capacity, and the importance of addressing emotional wellbeing needs.*

**E**ducation remains today, as throughout history, a transforming experience for young people. Not only a means out of poverty and a doorway to economic mobility, but one that enables *social* mobility in every sense of the word. That is why all National Children's Homes projects promote the educational achievements of children and young people. It is central to our work, from early years through to adult learning.

Many of the children and young people whom NCH works with are unable to take full advantage of the mainstream education system and need additional support to be able to reach their potential. NCH works with some of the most vulnerable groups of children and young people through some 500 different services across the UK. Those vulnerable groups include: looked after children, children on the edge of care, disabled children, young offenders, or those who face disadvantage because of economic, ethnic or social circumstances. Throughout our 140 year history we have seen education as one of the key components that enables "this" generation to break the cycle of deprivation in which children are often caught.

### **More spending does not equal better outcomes for all – the case of looked after children**

The past ten years of a new Labour Government have seen unprecedented investment in education accompanied by undoubted progress in many areas. Between 1997 and the current academic year, the core "per pupil" funding has risen by 48 per cent in real terms – or £1,450 more per year per child. By the end of next year, it will be a 55 per cent increase. That means that almost £1.2bn is spent on education every week. However this investment simply means that we now spend 5.6 per cent of GDP on education, which is only 0.1 per cent above the average for industrialised countries. (HM Treasury, 2007)

This investment was needed and is welcomed. Yet the last ten years has clearly demonstrated that there is no guarantee that investment alone leads to higher attainment, or that there is a simple equation that sees more money equal better outcomes *for all*. A very clear example of this is looked after children,<sup>1</sup> whose education outcomes compared to young people not in care reveal shocking inequalities. For example, in 2005, 43 per cent of all looked after children achieved at least one GCSE or GNVQ, compared with 96 per cent of the rest of the population, a percentage that has remained static since 2003. It is true that there is considerable regional variation in these achievements<sup>2</sup> but it is generally true that, as a group, young people leaving care are far more likely to experience social exclusion by a number of measures. Twenty per cent of children leaving care go on to be unemployed immediately after leaving school, compared with 6 per cent

of the general population; young people who were looked after are twice as likely to become teenage parents; between a quarter and a third of people sleeping rough were looked after at one point in their lives; about a quarter of adults in prison were looked after as children; and 83 per cent of those care leavers in custody had no GCSEs. (Horton, 2005)

This is not a recent phenomenon. The attainment gap between young people in care and the general population has been an indignity for generations and all those involved in these young people's lives are guilty of allowing standards and ambition for children in care to fall far below what is acceptable. Perhaps one reason for this is that looked after children represent a tiny minority of all school children and ensuring that schools understand and have the capacity to respond to their educational needs is a major task.

This issue was highlighted vividly last year in England's Annual Survey of Trends in Education (Chamberlain *et al*, 2006). Some of the key findings relating to children in care found that 22 per cent of primary and 10 per cent of secondary schools had neither a policy to support looked after children nor were they developing one. Furthermore, 25 per cent of primary and 12 per cent of secondary schools indicated that they did not have an agreed policy for cooperating with and supporting the local authority in promoting the educational achievements of looked after children, nor were they developing policies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was large primary schools and primary schools in more challenging circumstances that were more likely to prioritise looked after children in their support arrangements, while grammar schools, schools with low proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and schools with high levels of attainment were less likely to prioritise support for these children.

What these figures suggest is that, despite their best intentions, both central and local government have been unable to meet the needs of Britain's most vulnerable children. Vulnerable children – like those in care – have simply not received the attention they deserve and need. Yet the position is far from hopeless. In June 2007 we expect a new White Paper on children in care to be published. Together with its parent document, the Care Matters Green Paper, the hope is that a momentum is building that will lead to an approach and set of policies that can deliver change that is really beneficial.

### **What can be done for looked after children?**

For many the entrenched nature of continuing under-achievement amongst looked after children would suggest that little could or should be done. Yet a significant body of evidence now exists that demonstrates clearly measures that can lead to successful outcomes.

Much of this evidence has come from independent research, but in addition to the body of academic work which points to successful interventions, it is also worth noting the valuable contribution of government research in recent years. One such study was undertaken by the Social Exclusion Unit which found that, even taking account of traumatic experiences that often lead to initial care placement and of other social factors, “children in care do significantly worse than their peers”. (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003) The SEU identified five key reasons that explained the educational under-achievement of children in care. These were placement instability; time out of school; insufficient help with their education if they fall behind; insufficient support and encouragement at home; and unmet emotional, physical and mental health needs.

The same report listed the factors most strongly associated with later educational success. These included stability and continuity of home and school placements and positive encouragement from carers or parents

## **We need to consider far more complex and subtle ways of measuring how far every child has progressed in achieving their potential.**

(this was quoted as one of the most important factors with the educational background and expectations of carers also highly significant). Other “success” factors included: the peer support of friends who also did well at school; a significant adult who acted as a role model or mentor and offered consistent support, encouragement and advocacy; early reading; regular school attendance and developing out of school interests. Their study also demonstrated heightened achievement where local authorities had adopted a corporate parenting approach with effective liaison between education and social services and a raised commitment to children’s educational success.

Even more recently, evidence from the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review identified three factors as key to improving outcomes for all children and young people. (HM Treasury and DfES, 2007) These were: boosting attainment; positive parenting; and developing children’s social and emotional skills. Again, while the latter factor has proved controversial for some, there is sound evidence from the literature, mainly from the US, that demonstrates how work on emotional and social competence and well-being has a wide range of educational and social benefits, including greater educational and work success, improved behaviour, increased inclusion, improved learning, greater social cohesion, increased social capital, and improvements to mental health. (Weare and Gray, 2003)

### **What does this mean for looked after children?**

From this body of evidence it is possible to highlight several factors that would improve outcomes for looked after children. Firstly, the system must recognise the importance of corporate parenting. Having high expectations and acknowledging achievement is vital in delivering better outcomes (Jackson *et al*, 2003). Secondly, stability and continuity of placement is also vital, and children and young people themselves see its importance.

Other factors proved to lead to improved outcomes include regular attendance at school, positive encouragement at home, and support from a significant adult who could be the designated teacher.<sup>3</sup> However, training and support networks must be put in place to support these significant adults. Finally, encouraging out of school interests and overcoming negative stereotypes must not be underestimated. (Martin and Jackson, 2002)

### **Drawing out lessons for other vulnerable groups**

With the significant body of evidence available and the growing public debate and policy agenda, looked after children are an obvious vulnerable group to select as a case study for what can be achieved in terms of educational outcome. However, equally pressing are the needs of other groups. For example, the educational attainment of disabled children often exhibits all the inequalities noted above for children in care. Waiting for a similar momentum to build up in each case is simply not acceptable. Therefore, while recognising the diverse needs each individual group, and indeed each individual child, we do need to draw out larger themes and lessons that would benefit every child.

### **The importance of seeking achievement rather than attainment**

NCH's work has indicated that one of the key changes that could be made to our current system is a move away from the obsession with educational attainment and a move to an approach that values achievement. What this means in practice is that we would no longer measure progress by GCSE results alone. This is not to say qualifications are unimportant, but does recognise that GCSE results are just one indicator of potential outcomes in later life. Therefore, we should be looking at measuring the number of young people who secure employment, how many achieve longer term economic well being, have the ability to make enduring adult relationships or meet their own welfare needs. In short we need to consider far more complex and subtle ways of measuring how far every child has progressed in achieving their potential.

This is very different to the current preference for fixed measures like

exam results which do very little to build either self-esteem or wider achievement. As a result we should be encouraging the development of existing indicators that measure progression or regression as a better indicator of “value added” or “distance travelled”. In NCH we use outcome indicators. These are measurable statements that form the framework for our intervention with a young person based on their individual needs. They assist in identifying progress and determining the difference we have made at the point of review or closure. While not easy this is the difference that really matters.

### **Two other changes to make a difference**

There are two other potential changes that require consideration. Firstly, far greater attention is needed in addressing the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups. This will involve a debate over the appropriate role of state intervention: when and where is action required and what are the relative merits of universalism versus targeted services. The research in relation to looked after children suggests that there is room for both, and that vulnerable children often do need greater targeted support to realise any degree of “normalisation” in their educational experience.

### **There is now a growing appreciation regarding the impact of emotional wellbeing on a whole number of areas, including education.**

Secondly, there is now a greater awareness than ever before that improved educational achievement cannot be delivered only through a classroom. In other words the wider emotional and physical needs of these groups must be tackled in conjunction with schools’ curriculum. The link between physical health and outcomes has been known for some time, but there is now a growing appreciation regarding the impact of emotional wellbeing on a whole number of areas, including education. Recent reports suggest that this is a significant concern in modern Britain (UNICEF, 2007) and we would do well to develop policies that build young people’s resilience. These policies must acknowledge that a young person’s emotional well being is not solely determined by classroom experience, but neither is the school devoid of responsibility when it comes to building up resilience. Families, government, councils, the health service, and the third sector all have a role working with schools to address these wider issues.

### **Final thoughts**

Underpinning these calls must be a commitment to put the child or young person at the centre of all that we do. What that may mean in practice is

working together in co-operation not competition. Listening and engaging with young people so that they are intimately involved in defining their needs, developing the services that they use and determining the outcomes that they want to realise. It will also require an almost revolutionary culture change that most professionals – whether inside or outside the education sector – would welcome, and one that sees education not as an end in itself but as part of the continuum which is a child's development. It would mean developing education in its broadest sense rather than narrow it to a focus on exams, and become a celebration of achievement rather than attainment. Above all it suggests an agenda that addresses the personal whole welfare needs of every child, addressed not by a set of individual agencies, but by a group of stakeholders, all accountable, transparent and child centred.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Around 61,000 children and young people are looked after at any one time. Each year about 90,000 children are looked after, 42 per cent of whom return home within 6 months. 80 per cent of children entering care do so because of abuse or neglect. 2,900 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were looked after at March 2005. Looked after children represent about 20 per cent of all the children with whom children's social care work; they receive about 60 per cent of children's social care support and resources. 68 per cent of all placements are in foster care, 11 per cent are in children's homes. The rest are placed with parents (10 per cent), placed for adoption (6 per cent) or in a variety of other settings including residential schools and lodgings. One in four children in care is placed outside their home local authority.

<sup>2</sup> In the best performing local authority in 2004, 83 per cent of looked after children achieved one GCSE, in the worst performing authority the figure it was 16 per cent (*Working with Children*, NCH 2005). In 2004–05, 59 per cent of all care leavers were not in education, employment or training on their 19th birthday compared with 13 per cent of the wider population.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Fletcher-Campbell, E.; Archer, T. and Tomlinson, K. (2003) *The role of the school in supporting the education of children in public care*, Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills. (Research report; no. 498) <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR498.pdf> (Accessed: 19 July 2007) and carried out by a team of researchers at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). Also of possible interest *Taking Care of Education Project* – funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, undertaken by the National Children's Bureau and University of Luton and carried out in partnership with three local authorities. Harper, R.M. Dobel-Ober, D.; Berridge, D. and Sinclair, R. (2004a) More than the sum of its parts? inter-professional working in the education of looked

after children. *Children & Society*, vol. 18 no. 3, June, pp.179-193. Harper, R.M.; Dobel-Ober, D.; Berridge, D. and Sinclair, R. (2004b) *Taking care of education: an evaluation of the education of looked after children*. London: National Children's Bureau.

## References

- Chamberlain, T., Lewis, K., Teeman, D. and Kendall, L. (2006). *Schools' concerns and their implications for local authorities: annual survey of trends in education 2006*. Slough: NFER. (LGA Research Report 5/06)
- HM Treasury, (2007) *Budget 2007: building Britain's long-term future: prosperity and fairness for families: economic and fiscal strategy report and financial statement and budget report*, March 2007. London: TSO. (HC 342)  
[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/3/4/bud07\\_complereport\\_1757.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/3/4/bud07_complereport_1757.pdf) (Accessed: 19 July 2007)
- HM Treasury and Department for Education and Skills (2007) *Aiming high for children: supporting families*. London: Department for Education and Skills.  
[http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/\\_files/HMT%20YOUNG%20CHILDREN.pdf](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/HMT%20YOUNG%20CHILDREN.pdf) (Accessed: 19 July 2007)
- Horton, C. (Ed.) (2005) *Working with children 2006-07: facts, figures and information*. London: Guardian Books in association with Sage.
- Jackson, S., Ajayi, S. and Quigley, M. (2003) *By degrees: the first year: from care to university*. London: National Children's Bureau
- Martin, P.Y. and Jackson, S. (2002), Educational success for children in public care: advice from a group of high achievers. *Child & Family Social Work*, vol. 7 no. 2, May, pp.121-130.
- Social Exclusion Unit (2003) *A better education for children in care: Social Exclusion Unit Report*. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
<http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/seu/downloaddocdac1.pdf?id=32&pId=50> (Accessed: 19 July 2007)
- UNICEF. Innocenti Research Centre. (2007) *Child poverty in perspective: an overview of child well-being in rich countries: a comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations*. Florence: UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre.  
<http://www.unicef.org/media/files/ChildPovertyReport.pdf> (Accessed: 18 July 2007)
- Weare, K. and Gray, G. (2003) *What works in developing children's emotional and social competence and wellbeing?* Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills. (Research report; no. 456)  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR456.doc> (Accessed: 19 July 2007)

# Multiculturalism and the gender trap<sup>1</sup>: Young ethnicised<sup>2</sup> women and domestic violence in schools

Heidi Safia  
Mirza

Heidi Safia Mirza is Professor of Equalities Studies in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London, and Director of the Centre for Equalities and Human Rights in Education. She is known internationally for her work on ethnicity, gender and identity in education. As a member of the Labour Government's Schools' Standards Task Force she has shaped many initiatives to do with raising standards in education for black and minority ethnic pupils.

**Abstract:** *Socially responsible educators in multicultural Britain need to address the issue of gendered risk which young "ethnicised" women can face within their own communities and families. Young women growing up in minority ethnic communities who are subject to specific forms of cultural domestic violence, such as honour killings and forced marriage, are caught up in the contradictions of the cultural relativism of British multiculturalism on one hand, and the private/public divide which characterises our approach to domestic violence on the other. Liberal multiculturalism is popularly conceived as celebrating diversity and "tolerating" different cultural and religious values between groups. However in this model the notion of mutual tolerance is fragile. One way in which multiculturalism negotiates this fragility is to maintain a*

*laissez-faire approach to gendered cultural difference. This paper looks at some of the tensions and confusions involved in dealing with the hard and sensitive issues of gendered human rights violations which can become issues in our multicultural schools.*

*“Multiculturalism does not cause domestic violence, but it does facilitate its continuation through its creed of respect for cultural differences, its emphasis on non-interference in minority lifestyles and its insistence on community consultation (with male self defined community leaders). This has resulted in women being invisibilised, their needs ignored and their voices silenced.”*  
(Beckett and Macey 2001: 311).

**H**eshu Yones, a young Kurdish woman, was just 16 when she was brutally beaten and murdered by her father in 2004. He slashed her throat in the bath when he discovered that she was trading love letters with a boy in her class in her London school. His “cultural defense”<sup>3</sup>, which was supported by dozens of men from the Kurdish community, was that she had become too westernised and had brought her death upon herself (Nickerson, 2006). In Great Britain, a police review of 22 domestic homicides in 2005 resulted in 18 being reclassified as “murder in the name of so-called ‘honour’” (Nickerson, 2006). While such extreme violence upon women for breaking an honour code of the community is an abuse of human rights, there have been many attempts to justify it on religious or cultural grounds. This is also the case for forced marriage, a practice among certain minority ethnic communities living in the UK. A forced marriage, unlike an arranged marriage, is when the young person is coerced under either physical or emotional duress into a marriage against his or her will in the name of family honour (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2000).

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) deals with approximately 300 cases annually of marriage conducted without freely given consent (Foreign and Commonwealth Office *et al.*, 2006). Many of the cases involve young women under the age of 18. It is often younger women in their late teens and early twenties who are victims of these “dishonourable” crimes when their emerging sexuality comes under increasing regulation and control by the family and wider community. It is the young woman’s sexual purity and “honour” that is seen to define the status and regard with which the family is held in the community. The opposite to honour is shame, and this emotive combination is a powerful means of social control. Jasvinder Sanghera, who founded Karma Nirvana, an Asian women’s project, which provides confidential emotional and physical support for vulnerable

women facing domestic violence, explains, “every woman who comes to us has a problem with shame. It is a form of social control which oppresses Asian women and suppresses their ability to speak.” (*The Guardian*, 2002)

We may be incredulous when we read the sensationalised press reports<sup>4</sup> that a father and other close relatives, including women, can inflict such brutality on their own children in the name of honour or “izzat”, but many young women facing familial domestic violence of forced marriage and honour killings are being educated under our watch, within our school and college walls. As socially responsible educators, we need to ask “how do we understand and act on the gendered risk faced by many of these young ‘ethnicised’ women in their own communities in the name of ‘honour’”? In this paper I attempt to unravel some of the tensions and confusions that surround approaching the hard and sensitive issues of human rights violations in our multicultural schools.

### **Gendering multiculturalism: understanding the dynamics of sexism, racism and domestic violence**

It could be argued that these extreme forms of domestic violence involve only a small number of young women of Asian, African and Middle Eastern origin, but the persistence of such female centred crimes in Britain raises many issues about cultural sensitivity and the gendered nature of multiculturalism in the UK. Multiculturalism is a much disputed term, but it has evolved in the British context to mean respecting diversity and valuing cultural difference in the context of core shared values (Hall, 2000; Runnymede Trust, 2000; Blair, 2006). It is often used loosely in political discourse to affirm the distinctness, uniqueness and individual validity of different cultures, groups or communities, and also recognises the importance of acknowledging and accommodating these differences and distinctness. However, while liberal multiculturalism is popularly conceived as celebrating diversity and “tolerating” different cultural and religious values between groups, the notion of mutual tolerance is fragile.

One way in which multiculturalism negotiates this fragility is to maintain a laissez-faire approach to gendered cultural difference. In this regard young women growing up in minority ethnic communities are caught up in the contradictions of the cultural relativism of British multiculturalism on one hand, and the private/public divide which characterises our approach to domestic violence on the other. Gender differences within multiculturalism now and in the past have yet to be recognised. In the Commission on the Future of Multi Ethnic Britain, women get a three page mention in the 314 page report (Runnymede Trust, 2000). Similarly community cohesion reports fail to look at the specificity of gendered social action (Bhavnani, Mirza and Meeto, 2005). A gender-blind multiculturalism has consequences for “ethnicised” young women

who have remained to a large extent invisible, locked into the private sphere of the home where gender oppressive cultural and religious practices are still played out.

To understand the invisibility of gender and violence in our construction of multiculturalism we need to look at the way in which ethnicity has become reified and fixed in terms of our understanding of the inherent qualities of ethnic minority groups. This process of reification, when ethnic group identity becomes defensive and cultural and religious practices are constructed within imagined but rigid and fixed boundaries, is called “ethnic fundamentalism” (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Migration, whether forced or planned, often brings with it the break down of traditional certainties structuring life courses and heightening anxieties of loss and belonging. For migrant women who are seen as the upholders of traditional values, patriarchal practices can be amplified when they are estranged and separated from their homeland. Under threat, certain aspects of culture can ossify, become romanticised or even perversely preserved – what I call “pickled in aspic”.<sup>5</sup> When this happens, as we can see in the context of the negative discourse on Islamophobia, we witness a resurgence and persistence of fixed and regressive notions of ethnicity and nationalism as a primary basis for the elaboration of traditional beliefs. Such “ethnic fundamentalism” is reflected in our multiculturalist discourse. In our everyday talk we not only often assume cultural homogeneity among local communities, with each one spatially segregated, but it also means we often do not talk about difference within cultures as it is seen to be divisive and could lead to offence.

Focusing on culturally specific forms of domestic violence is often seen as very controversial ground. It is generally disputed that culture can explain how and why particular practices happen. By highlighting domestic violence issues in specific cultural and religious ethnic communities in the UK are we at risk of stereotyping these communities as backward and barbaric? Does this place a disproportionate emphasis on the “ethnicised” woman – racialising her by separating out these forms of domestic violence as a special cultural phenomena needing special cultural sensitivity? These questions lie at the heart of understanding the tensions between recognising gender oppression and preserving multicultural difference. This debate has been raised in relationship to gendered sexualised practices in particular cultures, such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages, and honour killings where the sanctity of (male) community rights are privileged over the bodily rights of individual (female) victims.

However, black and Asian feminists must and do raise difficult issues of sexism and domestic violence within their (black and Asian) communities. As a counter to the racist assertion that black and Asian men

are more barbaric, Gupta (2003) argues we must take a global perspective on domestic violence and see honour killing and forced marriage as part of a wider global patriarchal phenomenon of violence. Women are beaten and murdered across the globe for similar reasons and it is not particular to one culture or religious group or community. She argues domestic violence cuts across race, class, religion and age. Patriarchal structures use violence extensively to subjugate women in different forms in relation to class, race and ethnicity. Domestic violence is not an issue of racial or ethnic differences, it is a question of the economic, political and social development of a society and the levels of democracy and devolution of power within communities (Gill, 2003).

### **Negotiating risk: dealing with gender difference in multicultural settings**

How can professionals working with young people approach the issue of domestic violence and gendered human rights violations in the multicultural school? With the Government's *Every Child Matters* agenda schools are now key actors in identifying a young person deemed at risk. *Every Child Matters* is comprehensive in its scope stating, "organizations involved with providing services to children – from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups – will be teaming up in new ways ... to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life". Within this discourse professionals in schools are now seen as part of the "new class intellectuals" with privileged access to young people and therefore instrumental in monitoring who is "at risk" (Kelly, 2007). In this climate of increasing accountability and risk assessment, individuals and organisations are charged with getting risk right and are often required to defend decisions from litigation and assessment. The tendency to individualisation and accountability in the discourse on risk, along with a laissez-faire multicultural approach to dealing with violent gendered cultural practices within the private domestic sphere of the family, can easily lead to a situation of non-interventionism or what I call "multicultural paralysis" in cases of domestic violence.

This was particularly apparent in the recent case of Banaz Mahmod, a 20 year old Kurdish woman, who was sexually brutalized then murdered by her father and uncle because her boyfriend was not a strict Muslim and not from their immediate community. She was found strangled with a shoe lace and stuffed in a suitcase. The police did not respond to her repeated cries for help and she was described by one police officer in a gendered and racist stereotypical way as "melodramatic and manipulative" (*The Guardian*, 2007). Yasmin, a 19 year old Asian woman had a similar experience. At 15, her parents told her she was going abroad to get married. She explains, "My step-father, he beat me up so badly because he always

used to punch me. Once he punched me in the jaw and I couldn't open it for two weeks." But when Yasmin tried to tell her teacher she said, "My teacher just laughed it off. She didn't believe it was happening to me. The teacher, the school should have at least said something, done something. Or social services could've at least visited me to see if I was OK ... but no-one bothered" (BBC News, 2007).

On the other hand it may be difficult to tackle the issue of domestic violence as young women wish to protect their families' honour and divert attention away from the abuse. For example "S", a 14 year old young British woman of Bangladeshi origin, (Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office, 2005a) was a bright pupil with a good school record. By 16 she was withdrawn and began to truant, and while marks on her wrists and back raised concerns for teachers, she blamed them convincingly on "intergenerational tensions". After her GCSEs she disappeared, having been drugged and sent to Bangladesh to be forcibly married. Though her teacher called the Forced Marriage Unit and she was made a ward of the High Court, "S" did not complain as she did not want to bring shame on

## **Many young women facing familial domestic violence of forced marriage and honour killings are being educated under our watch, within our school and college walls.**

her parents, and so no action was taken. However, on her return to the UK she ran away from home and sought shelter in a refuge as she was raped by her husband. Though there was intervention on her behalf, the agencies and services tasked with her protection still failed to protect her.

While an overly sensitive multicultural approach can lead to negative action or inaction, it can also replicate structures of oppression within communities. Karma Nirvana, a voluntary organisation which helps young women flee forced marriage situations, reported that they have experienced problems disseminating information through schools due to schools being concerned about damaging their relationships with the parents (Sanghera, 2006). As recent BBC research shows, schools are at the centre of the debate on domestic violence as they have the potential to recognise that a forced marriage may take place when a female pupil is taken out of school and should report this to the appropriate authorities (BBC News, 2007). However, while the Forced Marriage Unit and DfES provides schools with guidelines on forced marriage (Department for Education and Skills *et al*, 2005), over half of councils who should have oversight of the issues in their locality do not know how many cases, if at all, are occurring, nor do they have any guidelines on the issue.

Black and minority ethnic women's groups have been central in raising

awareness and tackling problems related to domestic violence, sexuality and cultural and religious conservatism within specific communities and groups have contributed to placing minority ethnic women's issues on the agenda, thus various services have been developed as a result of struggle by these groups. In their evidence to the Working Party on Forced Marriage, Southall Black Sisters were concerned about the failure of service providers to address the needs of women and girls at risk of forced marriages and honour killings (CIMEL/INTERIGHTS, 2001). Such service providers may cite cultural grounds for this failure, on the assumption that minority communities are self policing, and they therefore do not have to intervene on behalf of these women. According to Siddiqui (2003) many community leaders who were consulted on the Working Group on Forced Marriages denied that there is a problem, and are hostile to women who refuse these marriages and women's organisations that work with them. Some have argued that issues raised around forced marriage are a form of racism and attack on the community, and on their cultural and religious heritage.

Despite these struggles by women's groups, male community leaders are still influential within certain communities. Ali Jan Haider, a Muslim social worker, relates how male family and community elders personally threatened him and his family when he helped a young 21 year old woman and her five children escape domestic violence and placed her in a refuge. The young woman had come to the UK aged 16 from the rural Mirpur district of Pakistan and had been subjected to persistent physical and mental abuse at the hands of her husband and her in-laws for several years. He explains the consequences of his actions:

*"...the community interference began in earnest. I had a phone call from a local Asian Councillor asking me if I could explain why I had taken mum and children away and broken up this respectable family. I then had phone calls and visits from countless community elders including a local religious leader. He did not waste any time castigating my actions and telling me what I had done was sinful. He told me how I should be personally held responsible for the family's loss of face, and the distress I had caused them."*

Haider, in outlining an Islamic perspective to domestic violence, explains the complex inter-relationship and confusion between the Muslim religion and Pakistani culture on one hand and the practice of the social services and his white and non-Muslim colleagues on the other. This confusion often leads to institutional paralysis or community resistance preventing Muslim women from seeking out help when they most need it.

## Conclusion

I began by asking "how do we as socially responsible educators understand

and act on the gendered risk faced by many of these young ‘ethnicised’ women in their own communities in the name of ‘honour?’” As our discussion reveals, there are many tensions that underpin an analysis of gendered human rights violations in a multicultural context. A key issue is that young women from ethnic minority communities are invisible within the discourse of multiculturalism and are therefore at risk of not being fully protected by the State agencies as equal citizens. They “fall between the cracks” of the multicultural discourse, as “race” and ethnicity is prioritised and gender differences and inequalities are rendered invisible. Social cohesion, which seeks to build on the idea of multicultural co-existence with its emphasis on interfaith dialogue, integration, and intercommunity understanding, still does not tackle the thorny issue of gender inequality in ethnic communities.

Often, when we are immersed in the cultural context of respecting and accommodating cultural difference, we do not see the bigger picture of universal violence against women and the human rights violations of these crimes. The climate that multiculturalism has produced in relation to racism is one of “walking on eggshells” where cultural differences are respected, often without question, for fear of offending communities and ethnic groups. In these situations young ethnic minority women can suffer from a lack of protection because organisations that deal with their protection are fearful of being seen as racist, or feel they lack the cultural expertise, or do not want to offend the communities’ sensibilities.

However, domestic violence must never be seen as a cultural matter, but always as a human rights issue (Salim, 2003). In 1995 the Beijing Platform for Action at the 1995 UN World Congress on Women declared that culture, tradition and religion could not be used by the State to avoid their obligation to protect women (Kelly, 2005). To develop a truly multicultural multiagency policy framework under *Every Child Matters*, schools need to be absolutely resolute in their approach to cultural forms of domestic violence. When dealing with community groups and state agencies, professionals in schools should be ever vigilant about whose perspectives are being heard and whose voices are being marginalized and by whom. This is not an easy task, it is a frontline position and there are issues of personal safety on all sides which need to be considered, but only by challenging the multicultural status quo can we move towards a more just and equitable response to the global issue of domestic violence that festers within all our communities, whether black, white or Asian.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This paper has been developed from an article written in conjunction with Veena Meeto (Meeto and Mirza, 2007a, 2007b). I wish to acknowledge her research and input into the material reported here. See

references.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term 'ethnicised women' in preference to the official and much contested term 'Black and minority ethnic women'. While the latter term denotes the social construction of difference through visible racial (black) and cultural (ethnic) markers, it does not emphasise the process of racial objectification implied by the former term which frames the women's experience. Thus being or becoming 'ethnicised' brings into play the power relations that inform and structure the gaze of the 'other'. Despite women's agency and activism, women deemed as 'the other' are often 'ethnicised' or typified by the media and state agencies in terms of their perceived (backward) cultural and religious practices. (see Bhavnani, Mirza and Meeto0 (2005). See references.)

<sup>3</sup> Culture is invoked only when defendants come from a racialised minority group and the crime gets attributed to culture only when people from that culture seem to be lagging behind. This then leads to representations of culture that can then justify the ill treatment of women (Phillips, 2003). See references.

<sup>4</sup> In the context of the bombings on 9/11 and 7/7 and there has been a marked media interest in anti Muslim stories – particularly ones that focus on women. However, highlighting their plight is not an innocent act aimed at promoting their well being and can be explained in terms of the rise of Islamophobia in the West. For an extended discussion of this phenomenon and other issues raised in this paper. See Meeto0 and Mirza, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Cultural change for migrant groups, however, is for the most part dynamic and reflexive and underscored by hybridity and creativity. This is particularly so with the women who renegotiate and re appropriate their traditional cultural markers, such as the wearing of the veil, making it transgressive rather than oppressive (Dwyer 1999) .

## References

- BBC News (2007). *Battle to stamp out forced marriage* Bernie Choudhury 26 January [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/6303653.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6303653.stm)
- Beckett, C. and Macey, M (2001) Race, gender and sexuality: the oppression of multiculturalism, *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol.24 no.3/4, pp. 309-319.
- Bhavnani, R., Mirza H.S and Meeto0, V (2005) *Tackling the roots of racism: lessons for success*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Blair, T (2006) Full Text of Blair's multiculturalism speech, *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 December. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/12/08/ublair208.xml> (Accessed: 30 July 2007)
- CIMEL(Centre of Islamic and Middle Easter Law) and INTERIGHTS, the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights (2001)

*Roundtable on strategies to address 'crimes of honour': summary report.* London: Women Living Under Muslim Laws. (WLUML occasional paper; no. 12) <http://www.wluml.org/english/pubs/pdf/occpaper/OCP-12.pdf> (Accessed: 30 July 2007)

Department for Education and Skills; Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office (2005) *Dealing with cases of forced marriage: guidance for education professionals 1st ed.* London: FCO.

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/FCO%2075263.pdf.pdf> (Accessed: 30 July 2007) also see *Spectrum* the DfES publication catalogue of news and issues for teachers. There are other publications dealing with child abuse and other 'culturally' sensitive issues of child abuse such as spirit possession – for these see

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/>

Dwyer, C. (1999) Veiled meanings: young British Muslim women and the negotiation of difference, *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol. 6 no.1, pp. 5-26.

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/> (accessed 23 January 2007)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2000) *A choice by right: working group on forced marriage.* London: FCO.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/KFile/AChoiceByRightJune2000.pdf> (Accessed: 30 July 2007)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Association of Directors of Social Services; Home Office; Department for Education and Skills and Department of Health (2004) *Young people and vulnerable adults facing forced marriage: practice guidance for social workers* London: FCO.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/Forced%20Marriage%20Guidelines%20for%20social%20workers.pdf> (Accessed: 30 July 2007)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office (2005a) *Forced marriage: a wrong not a right.* London: FCO and Home Office.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/forcedmarriageconsultation%20doc.pdf> (Accessed: 30 July 2007)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Scottish Executive and Home Office (2006) *Forced marriage: a wrong not a right: summary of responses to the consultation on the criminalisation of forced marriage.* London: FCO.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/05062006%20Final%20FM%20Report%20NJA.pdf> (Accessed: 30 July 2006)

Gill, A. (2003) A question of honour. *Community Care*, 27 March <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2003/03/27/40153/a-question-of-honour.html?key=GILL%20%20A> (Accessed: 30 July 2007)

*The Guardian* 'It's a family affair', Patrick Weir, Wednesday 23 January 2002

*The Guardian* 'Special units to crack down on honour killings', Karen McVeigh 16 June 2007

Gupta, R. (2003) Some recurring themes: Southall Black Sisters 1979-2003 – and still going strong. In: Gupta, R. (Ed) *From homebreakers to jailbreakers:*

*Southall Black Sisters*. London: Zed Books, pp.1-27.

Hall, S. (2000) The multicultural question. In: Hesse, B. (Ed) *Un/settled multiculturalisms: diasporas, entanglements, 'transruptions'*, London: Zed Books, pp. 209-241.

Kelly, L. (2005) Inside outsiders: mainstreaming violence against women into human rights discourse and practice. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 7 no 4, December, pp 471-495.

Kelly, P. (2007) Governing individualized risk biographies: new class intellectuals and the problem of youth at risk. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol.28 no.1, January pp. 39-53.

Meetoo, V. and Mirza, H.S. (2007a) There is nothing 'honourable' about honour killings: gender, violence and the limits of multiculturalism. *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 30 no 3, May-June, pp187-200.

Meetoo, V. and Mirza, H.S. (2007b) 'Lives at risk: multiculturalism, young women and 'honour' killings. In: Thom, B.; Sales, R. and Pearce, J. *Growing up with risk*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp.149-164.

Nickerson, C. (2006) For Muslim women, a deadly reminder: "honor killings" on the rise in Europe. *The Boston Globe*, 16 January.

[http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2006/01/16/for\\_muslim\\_women\\_a\\_deadly\\_defiance/?page=1](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2006/01/16/for_muslim_women_a_deadly_defiance/?page=1)

(Accessed: 2 August 2007)

Phillips, A. (2003) When culture means gender: issues of cultural defence in English courts, *The Modern Law Review*, vol. 66 no 4, July, pp. 510-531.

Runnymede Trust. (2000) *The future of multi-ethnic Britain: report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*. London: Profile Books (The Parekh Report)

Salim, S. (2003) "It's about women's rights and women's rights are human rights" an interview with Sawsan Salim, Coordinator of Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation (KRWO) London: KRWO received at Stop Violence Against Women Honour Killing Conference 28 October 2005: London.

Sanghera, J. (2006) *Honour abuse: the victims' story: International honour killings conference*, London: Amnesty International.

Siddiqui, H. (2003) It was written in her kismet: forced marriage. In: Gupta, R. (Ed) *From homebreakers to jailbreakers: Southall Black Sisters*. London: Zed Books, pp.67-91

Yuval-Davis, N. (1997) *Gender and nation*. London: Sage.

# Parenting support can help parents to develop better relationships with their children and reduce the risk of behaviour problems

**Abstract:** *Early-onset anti-social behaviours such as aggression and non-compliance predict poor school attendance and attainment and, if not addressed, lead to later delinquent adolescent behaviours, involving violence, crime and/or drug misuse. These problems are costly for society and for the individual. The most effective way to tackle these problem behaviours is by targeting children at an early age. Research has shown that whilst the effects of a positive school experience can be protective for some high risk children, the most effective programmes are those that work with parents, introducing them to the principles of social learning theory. Through attendance on evidence*

## Dr Judy Hutchings

Dr Judy Hutchings, the Research Director, is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with the North West Wales NHS Trust.

## Dr Tracey Bywater

Dr Tracey Bywater, the Project Trial Coordinator, has both studied and worked at the University of Wales, Bangor for twelve years. She has taught in both the psychology and criminology departments.

*based parenting programmes, parent-child relationships and child behaviour can be improved and the improvements maintained over time, but 30 years of research has demonstrated that not all programmes work equally well. This paper explores what works in parent programmes, using the work with the Incredible Years (IY) Parent programme as an example.*

**W**e are regaled daily by headlines reporting the damage and disruption caused by alienated youth, highlighting the difficulties facing our society as a result of young people engaging in violent behaviour, criminality and substance misuse. These antisocial behaviours and linked adolescent mental health problems have their origins in early childhood and are a large and growing problem. This has now become a topic of concern to policy makers and practitioners with the publication of, for example, the Social Exclusion Action Plan<sup>1</sup> (2006) and a plethora of Government initiatives such as Sure Start,<sup>2</sup> the Pathfinder Early Intervention Project<sup>3</sup> and Family Intervention Project<sup>4</sup> to address this problem.

As educationalists it is important to remind ourselves of the powerful effects that positive school experience can have, even for the most damaged and challenging children (Webster-Stratton, 1999). Developing a positive relationship at school can serve as a protective factor for children who are at risk of significant conduct disorder, antisocial behaviour and substance misuse. The evidence suggests that this can significantly reduce the impact of the factors that contribute to these difficulties (Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001; 2004). However, decades of research have made it clear that the single biggest impact on children is their home circumstances.

Risk factors include poverty, poor housing, single or young parenthood, adult conflict, substance misuse and mental health difficulties. There are also specific parenting behaviours that are a more direct influence, including lax or inconsistent discipline, punitive responses to problem behaviour and poor parental supervision. The Oregon Social Learning Centre (Patterson & Forgatch, 1995) has shown that, although difficult family circumstances increase the risk of conduct problems, it is through their impact on the quality of parenting that this takes place. So, since parenting contributes to the problem, it is not surprising therefore that support to parents provides the most effective solution, but it matters what the support is and how it is delivered.

There have been 40 years of parenting research since Wahler's original

study (1965) and the seminal early work of Patterson in cataloguing the coercive family processes that led to escalating levels of violence and coercion between parents and children (1982). Unfortunately, despite what is known about which parenting programmes do and do not work (Sherman *et al.*, 1997) Government has, until recently, been rather naive about the way it commissioned services, for example investing £3,100m in Sure Start services over the first three years of the scheme without requiring delivery of evidence based programmes. Consequently, despite its popularity and a significant amount of parenting support, a large-scale evaluation of Sure Start in England failed to demonstrate any consistent effects from the services provided, particularly for the most disadvantaged families whose children are most at risk (Belsky *et al.*, 2006). This is sadly just a reflection of the broader picture, which is that, although children at high risk of developing antisocial behaviour can be accurately identified at a young age, and that there are programmes that work, even those families that do receive help often do not receive “evidence based” help that is likely to be effective (Brestan & Eyberg, 1998).

So what does work? Over the last 30 years it has become apparent that behaviourally based parenting programmes are the only interventions that are effective in reversing these patterns (Kazdin *et al.*, 1990) but some work better than others. This body of research has also allowed us to establish

## **Teachers can play an important part in encouraging parents to engage with services and if delivered in schools they can further build the home-school partnership that is so important in helping children to succeed.**

which components of programmes are most effective and which delivery style facilitates learning by the parents of conduct problem children, particularly those at highest risk of long term problems, where the parents themselves are likely to be living in difficult circumstances and experiencing significant mental health problems.

The Center for Violence Prevention at the University of Colorado is funded by the American Government to review and report on programmes with evidence for violence prevention and reduction. The Center set strict criteria for study inclusion. The programme has to have been evaluated in a randomised controlled trial. It has to have been independently replicated by someone independent of the programme developer, to have long-term follow-up and the tools, manuals, training, etc, to enable it to be effectively delivered by others. They found only 11 programmes, of over 600 reviewed, that met these criteria and which they designated as “Blueprint”

programmes. A further 21 met some, but not all, of these criteria and were deemed worthy of further evaluation. Their website catalogues these programmes and is well worth visiting since in addition to child and family programmes it includes a number of school-based programmes such as Olweus' anti-bullying programme.

In exploring what makes parenting programmes work we will refer particularly to the Incredible Years (IY) parent programme, itself a model "Blueprint" programme (Webster-Stratton, Mihalic, Fagan *et al.*, 2001) to provide examples of the identified effective components for work with the families at greatest risk. This is the evidence based programme with which we have worked for the last 10 years in Wales and produced very strong evidence of its effectiveness in a randomised controlled trial working with identified high-risk pre-school children in North and Mid Wales. (Hutchings, Bywater, Daley *et al.*, 2007). Although the emphasis of this article is on parenting, the Incredible Years series also includes well-evaluated components for children and teachers.

Research informs us that, for parenting programmes to be effective with the children at greatest risk of conduct disorder and antisocial behaviour, we need to address three components: i) the programme content, ii) the process of delivery and iii) barriers to access for disadvantaged high-risk families. The effective components and delivery style are well described in Hutchings *et al.* (2004). The factors to consider in enabling access are described in Hutchings, Bywater and Daley (in press).

### **i) The programme content**

Effective specific components of programmes must include:

- A curriculum based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977).
- Active rehearsal of new parenting skills (Bandura, 1977; Knapp and Deluty, 1989).
- The teaching of principles rather than prescribed techniques. (McMahon *et al.*, 1981, Hutchings *et al.*, 2004).
- Strategies to ensure that parents practise new behaviours at home (Patterson, 1982, Webster-Stratton & Hancock, 1998).
- Non-violent sanctions for negative behaviour and strategies to build positive relationships through play and praise. (Wiltz and Patterson, 1974, Hobbs *et al.*, 1993).
- Strategies to address difficulties in the relationships between adults in the family (Dadds *et al.*, 1987, Webster-Stratton, 1994).

### **ii) The process of delivery**

The way in which programmes are delivered also affects outcomes. Research has identified the common factors that contribute to the success of interventions across a range of fields including health, education and

industry (Lambert, 1992; Hubble *et al*, 1999). The leaders of effective behavioural parenting programmes must build a collaborative alliance with parents (Webster-Stratton and Herbert, 1994).

Common factors include:

- Mobilising parents' resources and working in a way that is compatible with their beliefs and values.
- Accepting parents' goals at face value, tailoring tasks and suggestions to them and collaborating in exploring material relevant to them.
- Conveying an attitude of hope and possibility without minimising the problem or the pain that accompanies it.
- Encouraging parents to focus on present and future possibilities instead of past problems.

These common factors are particularly important in engaging multi-stressed hard to reach families who have many other difficulties in their lives and feel blamed for their children's problems and unsupported by helping agencies (Webster-Stratton, 1998).

### iii) Barriers to access

A further issue for high-risk families is that they are likely to either not engage in the first place or to drop out of programmes. So programmes need to work especially hard to recruit high-risk parents and ensure that, once recruited, these families stay in the programme. We have found that teachers can play an important part in encouraging parents to engage with services and if delivered in schools they can further build the home-school partnership that is so important in helping children to succeed. The Webster-Stratton Incredible Years (IY) programme (Webster-Stratton and Hancock, 1998; Webster-Stratton, Mihalic, Fagan *et al*, 2001) provides an excellent example of how to both recruit and retain the parents of high-risk children. The programme is made accessible through the provision of transport, day care, meals and flexible course times. Once recruited, the programme is delivered collaboratively and tailored to the needs and circumstances of individual families.

The three components described above: content, process and access issues, have been demonstrated to make the difference for the engagement and retention of the parents of the children at greatest risk of long term problems in effective parenting programmes (Hartman, Stage and Webster-Stratton, 2003). All of these issues were addressed in the North Wales Sure Start study of parents of high-risk three and four year old children (Hutchings, Bywater, Daley *et al*, 2007; Hutchings *et al*, in press). Furthermore the results suggested that this was achieved for a relatively small cost (Edwards *et al*, 2007). The success of this research is attributed to five factors:

## **1. Selecting a programme with evidence of effectiveness for the target population**

The IY basic parent programme had been extensively researched among very high-risk Head Start parents of pre-school children in Seattle over the last 30 years and has been identified as an effective treatment and prevention programme. Given the outcomes from its use with highly disadvantaged Head Start families, it was considered relevant to a targeted population of parents of three and four year old high-risk children living in Sure Start areas of Wales.

## **2. Developing a strategy for recruiting the target population**

Since we were targeting parents of high-risk children, already within the clinical range, it was important to develop an effective recruitment strategy. In our case this involved health visitors (HVs) initiating contact with families that they thought had children already showing significant signs of problem behaviour. HVs know their families well and 98 per cent of families that they approached met the criteria of risk of conduct disorder for our trial entry. We also ensured that HVs were trained to inform parents that they were being invited into the programme because they had a harder-to-parent child, not because they were poor parents. Additionally parents were met by the research team and group leaders prior to the start of the programme to tell them about the programme and answer any queries they had.

## **3. Addressing relevant service access issues**

Programmes that address access issues are more effective at recruiting and retaining the high-risk families that normally do not attend such programmes. In Webster-Stratton's (1998) study, 88 per cent of high-risk Head Start parents were recruited and retained for at least half (six or more of the twelve sessions) of the programme. This was achieved by the provision of child-care, meals and transport for parents. Our own study replicated Webster-Stratton in this respect and found a similar high level of recruitment and retention (83 per cent attended seven or more of the twelve sessions).

## **4. Ensuring implementation fidelity, ie that the programme was delivered as originally designed and researched**

Implementation fidelity is an issue of growing importance as increasing numbers of research based programmes are being delivered in public services. It means ensuring that the chosen programme is delivered in a way that replicates its original delivery and should therefore replicate its

successful results. Unfortunately far too often this does not happen and programmes are delivered by insufficiently trained staff without adequate resources (Mihalic, Fagan, Irwin *et al*, 2002). Implementation fidelity involves firstly that the programme has the materials and resources that make it possible for the programme to be delivered in the correct way. This involves training leaders, giving them sufficient time to deliver the programme, resources and materials, consultation and supervision. In our study all staff had previously undertaken the basic three day training, had experience of delivering the programme, were allocated a day and a half a week to deliver it and received three hours of supervision each week. This latter ensured that all leaders met the criteria for accreditation as programme leaders. Supervision focused on both the core content and also group process issues ensuring that the “common” factors of collaboration and addressing parents’ own goals were dealt with. We also provided books, handouts and materials to ensure that all 12 groups across the 11 Sure Start areas (covering a wide geographical area) were providing parents with the same materials.

### **5. Evaluating the programme delivery and outcomes to check that the same results could be achieved in Wales**

Finally we addressed the evaluation issue. In our case this was by means of an independent randomised controlled trial funded by The Health Foundation (Hutchings, Bywater, Daley *et al*, 2007). The results demonstrated significant improvements in child compliance, parental positive parenting and parental mental health as well as significant reductions in aggressive child behaviour, parental negative parenting and parental stress. Whilst the quality of evidence that we were able to collect was clearly beyond what is possible in service settings it is nevertheless important to ensure that some data is collected to demonstrate outcome. At the very least attendance and attrition are important indicators of whether a programme is meeting service users’ needs. There are also several fairly straightforward parent report measures on child behaviour, parenting style and parental stress and mental health that should be routinely used to ensure that services are effective. The Incredible Years Wales centre acts as a resource for services on evaluation issues.

### **Conclusion**

Parents have the single biggest influence on child behaviour and programmes to support them provide best outcomes for children at risk of long-term delinquency, criminality, mental health problems and substance misuse. However, some programmes are more effective for the children at highest risk of long-term problems than others. These are programmes, such as the IY parent programme, that incorporate the essential specific

programme content, are delivered using a collaborative style and facilitate access. Public services are expensive and we need to ensure that the services we offer actually work. We also need to recognise the role of schools in establishing partnerships with parents of challenged children (themselves often challenging to work with) and encouraging parents to access the help that will enable their children to benefit from education. Many schools do this well and the Incredible Years teacher programme, “How to Promote Children’s Social and Emotional Competence” (Webster-Stratton, 1999) has many useful ideas on how teachers can be even more effective at achieving this.

In this article we have focused on the importance of working with parents. However, Webster-Stratton also has a well researched programme for children, incorporating a curriculum of how to do your best in school, how to detect and understand feelings, solve problems, manage anger and make and keep friends. She has also developed and researched a programme for teachers that builds teacher-pupil relationships, increases child positive behaviour and promotes effective positive discipline strategies. She has demonstrated the need for some children to be supported by these other programmes as well as the parent programme which, although it improves parent-child relationships and child compliance at home, does not reliably predict improved child/peer relationships, problem solving and academic engagement which benefit from the child and teacher programmes (Webster-Stratton and Hammond, 1997, Webster-Stratton, Reid and Hammond, 2001, Webster-Stratton, Reid and Hammond, 2004);. Preliminary results from using the child and teacher programmes in Wales (Hutchings, Lane *et al*, 2004; Hutchings, Bywater, Daley and Lane, 2007, Hutchings, Daley, Jones *et al*, submitted) are also showing positive results.

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> The Social Exclusion Action Plan sets out actions that the Government is taking to improve the life chances of those who suffer, or may suffer in the future, from disadvantage.

<sup>2</sup> Sure Start is a UK Government initiative set up to offer family and child services in socially deprived areas.

<sup>3</sup> Eighteen Authorities in England have been funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to deliver one of three parent programmes (Triple P, Incredible Years and Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities).

<sup>4</sup> Fifty Authorities in England are funded by the DfES to take part in the Family Intervention Project (FIP) by receiving training to deliver programmes from a menu, including Triple P, Incredible Years and Strengthening Families).

## References

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs: London: Prentice-Hall.
- Belsky, J.; Melhuish, E.; Barnes, J.; Leyland, A. H. and Romaniuk, H. (2006). Effects of Sure Start local programmes on children and families: early findings from a quasi-experimental, cross sectional study. *British Medical Journal*, vol. 332 no.7556, 24 June, pp. 1476-1478.  
<http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/332/7556/1476?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=Effects+of+Sure+Start+local+programmes&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>  
 (Accessed: 23 July 2007)
- Brestan, E.V. and Eyberg, S.M. (1998). Effective psychosocial treatments of conduct disordered children and adolescents: 29 years, 82 studies and 5,272 kids. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, vol. 27 no. 2, pp.180-189.
- Dadds, M.R., Schwartz, S. and Sanders, M. (1987). Marital discord and treatment outcome in the treatment of childhood conduct disorders. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, vol.55 no. 3, June, pp. 396-403.
- Edwards, R.T.; Céilleachair, A.; Bywater, T.; Hughes, D.A. and Hutchings, J., (2007) Parenting programme for parents of children at risk of developing conduct disorder: cost-effective analysis. *British Medical Journal*, vol.334 no. 7595, 31 Mar, p.682. <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/334/7595/682>  
 (Accessed: 23 July 2007)
- Hartman, R. R.; Stage, S. A. and Webster-Stratton, C. (2003). A growth curve analysis of parent training outcomes: examining the influence of child risk factors (inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity problems), parental and family risk factors. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. 44 no. 3, pp. 388-398.
- Hobbs, S. A.; Walle, D. L. and Hammersly, G. A. (1993) The relationship between child behavior and acceptability of contingency management procedures. *Child and Family Behaviour Therapy*, vol.12, pp.95-102.
- Hubble, M., Duncan, B., & Miller, S. (1999). *Heart and soul of change: what works in therapy*. Washington: American Psychological Society.
- Hutchings, J.; Bywater, T.; Daley, D.; Gardner, F.; Whitaker, C.; Jones, K.; Eames, C. and Edwards, R.T. (2007). Parenting intervention in Sure Start services for children at risk of developing conduct disorder: a pragmatic randomised controlled trial. *British Medical Journal*, vol.334 no.7595, 31 March, pp. 678-682. <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/334/7595/678?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=1&author1=Hutchings%2C+j.&author2=Bywater%2C+T.&title=pragmatic+randomised+controlled+trial&andorexacttitle=and&andorexacttitleabs=and&andorexactfulltext=and&searchid=1&F> (Accessed: 23 July 2007)
- Hutchings, J., Bywater, T.; Daley, D. and Lane, E. (2007) A pilot study of the Webster-Stratton Incredible Years Therapeutic Dinosaur School

- programme. *Clinical Psychology Forum* 170, 21-24.
- Hutchings, J., Bywater, T., & Daley, D. (in press). Early prevention of Conduct Disorder: How and why did the North West Wales Sure Start study work? *Journal of Children's Services*.
- Hutchings, J., Daley, D., Jones, K., Martin, P., Bywater, T., & Gwyn, R., (submitted) *Early results from developing and researching the Webster-Stratton Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Training Programme in North West Wales*.
- Hutchings, J., Gardner, F. & Lane, E. (2004). Making evidence-based interventions work. In Sutton, C., Utting, D. & Farrington, D. (2005). *Support from the start: Working with young children and their families to reduce the risks of crime and anti-social Behaviour*. Research Report 524: Department for Education and Skills, 69-79.
- Hutchings, J., Lane, E., Ellis Owen, R. & Gwyn, R. (2004) The introduction of the Webster-Stratton Classroom Dinosaur School Programme in Gwynedd, North Wales. *Education and Child Psychology*, 21 (4) 4-15.
- Kazdin, A. E., Bass, D., Ayers, W.A., & Rodgers, A. (1990). The empirical and clinical focus of child and adolescent psychotherapy research. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 58, 729-740.
- Knapp, M. & Deluty, R.H. (1989) Relative effectiveness of two behavioural parent training programs. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 18, 314-322.
- Lambert, M. J. (1992). Implications of outcome research for psychotherapy integration. In J. C. Norcross & m. R. Goldstein (Eds.) *Handbook of Psychotherapy Integration* (pp.94-129). New York: Basic Books.
- McMahon, R.J., Forehand, R., Griest, D.L. & Wells, K. (1981) Who drops out of treatment during parent behavioural training? *Behavioral Counseling Quarterly*, 1, 79-85.
- Mihalic, S., Fagan, A., Irwin, K., Ballard, D., & Elliot, D. (2002). *Blueprints for Violence Prevention Replications: Factors for Implementation Success*. Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado, Center for the Study of Prevention of Violence.
- Pathfinder & FIP projects. Information at: [www.respect.gov.uk/members/article.aspx?id=8846](http://www.respect.gov.uk/members/article.aspx?id=8846)
- Patterson, G. R. (1982). *Coercive Family Process*. Eugene, OR: Castalia.
- Patterson, G. R. & Forgatch, M. S. (1995). Predicting future clinical adjustment from treatment outcome and process variables. Special Issue. Methodological issues in psychological assessment research. *Psychological Assessment*, 7, 275-285.
- Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion (2006). HM Government. Accessible at: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_exclusion\\_task\\_force/publications/reaching\\_out/reaching\\_out.asp](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/publications/reaching_out/reaching_out.asp)
- Sherman, L. W., Gottfredson, D. C., MacKenzie, D., Eck, J., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. (1997). *Preventing Crime: What works, what doesn't, what's promising*:

*A report to the United States Congress. University of Maryland.* Accessible at: [www.preventingcrime.org](http://www.preventingcrime.org)

Wahler, R., Winkel, G., Peterson, R., & Morrison, D. (1965). Mothers as behavior therapists for their own children. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, Sep.3(2), 113-124

Webster-Stratton, C. (1994). Advancing videotape parent training: A comparison study. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62, 583-593.

Webster-Stratton, C. (1998). Preventing conduct problems in Head Start children: Strengthening parenting competencies. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 66 (5), 715-730.

Webster-Stratton, C. (1999) *How to promote children's social and emotional competence*. London: Paul Chapman.

Webster-Stratton, C. & Hammond, M. (1997). Treating children with early-onset conduct problems: a comparison of child and parent training interventions. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 65, 93-109.

Webster-Stratton, C. & Hancock, L. (1998). Parent training for young children with conduct problems. Content, methods and therapeutic process. In: Schaefer CE, editor. *Handbook of Parent Training*. New York: Wiley.

Webster-Stratton, C. & Herbert, M. (1994). *Troubled Families – Problem Children*. Chichester: John Wiley.

Webster-Stratton, C., Mihalic, S., Fagan, A., Arnold, D., Taylor, T., & Tingley, C. (2001). *Blueprints for violence prevention: The Incredible Years parent, teacher, and child training series*. Boulder, Colorado: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado.

Webster-Stratton, C., Reid, J., & Hammond, M. (2001). Preventing conduct problems, promoting social competence: A parent and teacher training partnership in Head Start. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 30, 283-302.

Webster-Stratton, C., Reid, J. M., & Hammond, M. (2004). Treating Children with Early-Onset Conduct Problems: Intervention Outcomes for Parent, Child, and Teacher Training. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 33, 105-124.

Wiltz, N.A. & Patterson, G.R. (1974). *An Evaluation of Parent Training Procedures Designed to Alter Inappropriate Aggressive Behaviour of Boys*. *Behaviour Therapy*, 5, 215-221.

## Websites

Centre for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado at Boulder. <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/> (Accessed: 23 July 2007)

The incredible years – effective training programs to reduce children's aggression and increase social competence at home and at school  
<http://www.incredibleyears.com>

Incredible Years Wales  
<http://www.incredibleyears.wales.co.uk>

# IntoUniversity: Making it happen

**Abstract:** *Rachel Carr describes the history and development of IntoUniversity, an educational programme based at St Clement and St James Community Project in North Kensington which reaches 850+ users on-site each year. She outlines the activities that are run in order to encourage disadvantaged children and young people to aspire to university and to attain a university place. She also considers the factors she believes have made the programme successful and reports on the evaluation of the programme by the National Foundation for Educational Research, which recommends that IntoUniversity opens further centres.*

## Rachel Carr

Dr Rachel Carr is Chief Executive of IntoUniversity. Previously she was a Senior Lecturer in English Literature.

**I**ntoUniversity is a grassroots education programme addressing underachievement and social exclusion. It targets children and young people at risk of failing to meet their potential to go to university due to economic, social, cultural, or linguistic disadvantage. At the heart of the programme is our belief that underachievement is best addressed in the context of a long-term pastoral engagement with young people where we can build their esteem and support their learning to enable them to reach their potential to go to university or realise another chosen educational aspiration. We recognise that university is not for all our users and support those with another educational aspiration to achieve it.

Our original idea for an education programme related to higher education was that we would target first year undergraduates at risk of dropping out of university. I had previously worked as an academic in the new university sector and had seen at first hand the adverse consequences of high drop-out rates from degree courses and I had taught many first-generation university students ill-equipped to cope with university life and study. We therefore initially planned to run an academic and pastoral scheme for year 13 pupils and first-generation university students attending new universities and at risk of failing their degrees. However, informal approaches to several universities quickly indicated both a

reticence to admit publicly to high drop-out rates and that universities felt they were successfully providing their own academic and pastoral support services.

We then began to investigate more thoroughly the academic research about underachievement and university access for those groups underrepresented in higher education. A shocking picture – now more publicly seen and recognised – of underachievement amongst young people from disadvantaged communities emerged.<sup>1</sup> And from this picture the idea for **IntoUniversity** (hereafter IU) was born. It ran as a pilot scheme (funded by the Sutton Trust and the Hollick Family Charitable Trust) as part of St Clement and St James Community Project, Notting Dale (where it is still based) in 2002-2003. In its pilot year it aimed to provide services for 75 young people in North Kensington.<sup>2</sup> From the outset, and at the time

## **We know that if we are encouraging young people to aspire to go to university we must also provide young people with the tools they need to get there: academic results.**

most unusually, we targeted children as young as aged 8, with the knowledge that our programme would need to be over the long-term (Hansen and Joshi, 2007) and a crucial factor in the early success of the programme was that IU did not emerge in a vacuum.

The Community Project was already running a highly successful and very well-respected Community Education Programme which included carnival arts, adult learning and a large (200+) and popular after-school study support club. The latter was largely for primary school children but had begun to offer some provision to secondary school children. During IU's first year we piloted different models of working including one-to-one support with UCAS forms, broadening our secondary school provision and providing hands-on weeks of subject-based learning, culminating in a university visit. It became apparent during the pilot year that demand was exceeding supply and we decided to expand the programme dramatically, fundraising for, and then employing, a larger staff team from September 2003. It was at this point that the three strands of IU that still exist today emerged (although new elements have been added each year). These three strands, summarised below, are: academic support; the FOCUS programme; and a mentoring scheme.

### **Academic support provision:**

We know that if we are encouraging young people to aspire to go to university we must also provide young people with the tools they need to get there: academic results. Our academic support provision is designed to

encourage children and young people to take responsibility for their own learning and to raise levels of achievement.

We run after-school academic support sessions for primary and secondary school students in three dedicated classrooms (primary, middle, upper secondary). We provide tutored help with homework, literacy and numeracy, using target setting and formal assessment. Volunteer university students provide additional tuition. We improve academic results, increase confidence and motivation, and help young people re-engage with learning outside school hours. We aim to provide a safe and stimulating educational environment in which children and young people can do their homework. Young people set themselves (with help) targets for each year and we help them reach them through worksheets (including worksheets for years 3-9 about university), educational computer games and homework set by schools. Our programme has Quality in Study Support (established) status.

We also run Easter holiday revision sessions for years 9-13, with one-on-one help from university students on specific subjects as well as specialist workshops on SATs topics such as Shakespeare set texts.

A further element of academic support is one-on-one advice sessions on UCAS applications, course options, interview techniques and, for parents, on secondary school applications.

We have also developed specially devised workshops which we run either at our centre or in schools. These include "What is a University?" for year 5, "My move to Secondary School" for year 6 and super learning days for years 9 and 10. The final element of this strand of IU is Aspire and Achieve training, taught to young people who come out of school for three days. We use the Pacific Institute's Go For It! course to teach young people techniques to raise confidence, self-esteem and motivation, techniques to deal with difficult situations and techniques to increase their educational chances. We also use it to give young people hope that they will escape from a negative cycle of underachievement and/or cycle of confrontation with adults.

### **FOCUS provision:**

The FOCUS programme is designed to enrich the National Curriculum and to demonstrate that learning experientially can transform the way young people view education. The FOCUS programme promotes teamwork, positive behaviour and inter-personal skills and we have high expectations of young people's behaviour and achievements. Small teamwork provides participants with the opportunity to develop positive relationships with adults who are neither their teachers nor their parents. Often young people who may display challenging behaviour at school find they can take pride in their achievements on this programme. All FOCUS

provision culminates in a public event (usually at a university where the students graduate with certificates and prizes) at which each team presents their work.

We run FOCUS days and weeks during term time for years 5 and 6 (who come out of school with their class teacher) and during half-term for mixed-age groups (years 6-11). This provision is subject-based and provides challenging and stimulating experiential educational activities to promote a love of learning. Through hands-on university visits we also introduce young people from aged 10 to the idea that university is something for *them* to aspire to. A typical Science Week is organised in collaboration with Imperial College and the Science Museum, and includes

**We are not trying to supplement schools' work but to provide the kind of academic support and personal expectation that is a matter of course in many middle-class families.**

problem-solving, experiments, workshops, team presentations and visits.

Our Extending Horizons weekends give young people experiences most of them would not otherwise have, helping to raise their aspiration and motivation to achieve at school and promoting the importance of team building. Weekends have included Cambridge, First World War battlefields and Bergen Belsen. These weekends demonstrate to young people that there is a wider world than school and home, with challenges and opportunities to be met and grasped. The IU team also use the weekends to encourage young people to think about their aspirations and ambitions and to give advice in an informal, unthreatening context. After-school FOCUS provides 10-week courses where young people gain a depth of knowledge about a range of subjects through working alongside volunteer professionals. Examples of topics include: law, journalism and finance. As part of these courses we teach young people how to put their own point of view across successfully *and* the value of listening to other people's opinions.

**Mentoring provision**

This strand of our programme provides young people with a role model who has already made it into university. We decided from the outset that we should provide face-to-face mentoring rather than e-mentoring. We work with Imperial College, the LSE and UCL to pair university students with our users in years 6-13. The mentor helps his or her pair with social skills, and school work and they enjoy leisure activities together. During the mentoring relationship the mentor also encourages his/her pair to take control of his/her future. This includes introducing young people to the

terminology of universities, the experiences of undergraduates and providing young people with practical information about university. Pairs meet every two to three weeks and we encourage the relationship to continue over more than one year. The mentoring programme has received “Approved Provider” status. IU users are only provided with a mentor if they have demonstrated a commitment to other aspects of our programme. The second element of this strand was piloted this academic year.

Our buddy programme provides pupils from years 8 and 9 with an out-of-school workshop on university, followed by a subject-based workshop led by volunteer students. Two weeks later the same pupils visit a university and are paired with a trained buddy for the day to gain an “insider” view of university in a non-threatening context.

### **The success of the programme and expansion to new centres**

In 2004-2005 we began to discuss with the Sutton Trust expanding IU and running it in other areas. The Sutton Trust’s experience was that there are many excellent examples of agencies providing best practice widening-participation work in a number of fields – including, increasingly, work with primary school children – but that our multi-stranded model was distinctive. It was decided that while considering expanding our programme we should: a) begin to define more formally what we had been putting into practice over the last three years; and b) seek advice on expansion from stakeholders and professionals. Considering the former, we concluded that the following are the key factors leading to the success of our programme:

- We have excellent educational partnerships and volunteers. Our university partners include Brunel, De Montford, Imperial College, LSE, UCL, and Westminster. Other partners include the Sutton Trust, JP Morgan, the Science Museum, the Royal Geographical Society, Aim Higher, and 15 local primary and secondary schools.
- We offer a centre-based service away from school. The centre is a distinctive place of belonging for students, chosen by them and available to them all year round. The centre accumulates “social capital” in a way that cannot be achieved in school. We create our own positive ethos and provide young people with intensive experiential learning in a non-school context. We provide a fresh start at the end of the school day, where young people engage with staff who have no pre-conceived expectations based on behaviour at school. We are a place chosen by our users not a place they *have* to attend.
- We are a “home-from-home” rather than a “school-from-school”. We are not trying to supplement schools’ work (indeed we work in very close partnership with local schools) but to provide the kind of academic

support and personal expectation that is a matter of course in many middle-class families.

- We maintain a high staff/student ratio and have a dedicated and professional team. This is crucial for the quality both of the educational support and the maintenance of pastoral relationships. It enables the development of positive, affirming relationships with young people who receive substantial individual attention.
- We place an emphasis on the pastoral element of our model. We see the affirmation and emotional security of the learner as essential to academic achievement. We believe in a holistic approach. We build long-term relationships with young people which are never just about academic attainment. This enables us to see the “wider picture” and understand factors influencing young people’s decisions.
- We start at primary age and work over the long term. Academic research shows that access to university from socially-excluded groups needs young people to aspire to future university study from a young age. Most widening participation models addressing underachievement begin at secondary age; we target young people from year 3. We aim to provide continuity and a stable environment. We recognise the value of smooth transitions in keeping young people in education.
- We maintain a positive, aspirational ethos. We believe children and young people can succeed in life and that their decisions and the attitudes they have help shape their futures for good or bad. We work to promote good behaviour, pride in achievements and a positive, safe and stimulating out-of-school environment. We target those who may be disaffected with school and/or underachieving and build their confidence and self-esteem.
- We use a multi-stranded approach. We recognise that young people need a range of support in order to raise and attain their aspirations: academic support, new learning opportunities, aspirational activities and confidence building. We refer students between different aspects of our programme to provide ongoing, in-depth support. We bridge key points where young people may become disaffected with school.

In February 2006 the Sutton Trust and St Clement and St James Community Project jointly hosted a symposium to consult professionals and stakeholders on the question of IU expansion. Attended by professionals from the educational, charity, business and government sectors, the conclusion of the symposium was that we should look to open new IU centres – but only if an external evaluation of work at our existing centre deemed it successful. Our own continued evaluation of the IU programme since inception had indicated to us that our model works. All strands of the programme are formally evaluated by users, parents and

teachers. Some examples of comments on evaluation forms include:

*“They really benefited from the open-ended balloon challenge – it got them testing out loads of scientific processes.”* (Year 6 teacher); *“The number of staff and the smallness of groups was great. Super activities. Really well resourced and prepared. Thank you so much! Great use of space also and very knowledgeable and keen staff.”* (Year 6 teacher, Avondale School); *“I would definitely recommend the Mentoring Scheme to a friend, as I feel they could hugely benefit from learning new knowledge... and developing or enhancing certain skills e.g. communication skills, organizational skills”* (Mentee). *“There is a real sense of awe at the visits/events which undoubtedly have given students confidence and the ability to aspire. I have seen a growth in confidence with the majority of students. They appreciate each other and are able to work with greater maturity as a group.”* (Director of Learning, Burlington Danes Academy).

In May 2007 the results of the external evaluation, carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research, were published. A specific recommendation in the report was that we should expand to other areas. We now plan to open five new London IU centres by 2010 with a view to opening further centres in other parts of the UK post 2010.

We were delighted that the key finding of the NFER evaluation was that:

*“[T]he IntoUniversity programme has a positive, transformational impact on children and young people in terms of their academic success, attitudes to learning and social skills; all of which are key elements of helping children and young people to aspire and achieve. It was clear that IntoUniversity had played a key role in helping children and young people in clarifying, supporting and strengthening their aspirations and achieving their goals.”*

(White, K. *et al*, 2007)

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The link between underachievement and home circumstances has been the subject of academic research for the past 50 years. Researchers from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) spent five years mapping out the proportion of school leavers going to university in every region, parliamentary constituency and ward in the UK between 1994 to 2000: ‘Young people from the most advantaged areas were up to six times more likely to go to university than those in the most disadvantaged areas. The disparity changed little over the period of the study.’ (*The Guardian* January 2005); Research commissioned by CVCP, HEFCE and UCAS from the Institute for Employment Studies (‘Making the Right Choice: How Students Choose Universities and Colleges’, 1999) showed that many

students' decisions about further study had been largely formulated by Year 11. The study also showed that fewer than 1 in 10 young people identify school careers services, teachers or university staff as a source of information about HE. Research by Merryn Hutchings and Louise Archer at the University of North London (*'Higher than Einstein': constructions of going to university among working class non-participants*) investigated the causes of under-representation of lower socio-economic groups in HE. Those consulted 'did not expect any pleasure for themselves at university, but derided both the social and academic indulgences of middle class students. The middle class version of university was something one could dream of, but was not seen as a realistic possibility by most respondents; it was only feasible for those with qualifications "higher than Einstein", and secure financial support.'

<sup>2</sup>We are based in an area of inner-city deprivation in the borough which has the widest poverty/wealth gap in the UK.

## References

Connor, H., Burton, R., Pearson, R., Pollard, E. and Regan, J. (1999) *Making the right choice: how students choose universities and colleges*. London: Universities UK. <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/summary/summary.php?id=cvcpchoi> (Accessed: 26 July 2007)

Curtis, P. (2005) Postcode lottery for university entrants: researchers find school leavers from 'good' areas six times more likely to go on to higher education than those from poorer parts. *The Guardian*, 20 January <http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,,1394348,00.html> (Accessed: 26 July 2007)

A recent study reported that 'a picture of early childhood disadvantage is emerging as likely to have important implications for educational progress and adjustments in later life.', Hansen, K. and Joshi, H. (Eds.) (2007) *Millennium cohort study: second survey: a user's guide to initial findings, July 2007*. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, University of London.

<http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/downloads/Users%20Guide%20to%20Initial%20Findings%20-%20200707.pdf> (Accessed: 26 July 2007)

Higher Education Funding Council for England (2005) *Young participation in higher education*. Bristol: HEFCE.

[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05\\_03/05\\_03.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_03/05_03.pdf) (Accessed: 26 July 2007)

Hutchings, M. and Archer, L. (2001) 'Higher than Einstein': Constructions of going to university among working-class non-participants. *Research Papers in Education*, vol. 16 no. 1, March, pp. 69-91.

White, K., Eames, A. and Sharp, C. (2007) *A qualitative evaluation of the IntoUniversity programme*. Internet: National Foundation for Educational

Research in England and Wales.

<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/summaries/a-qualitative-evaluation.cfm> (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

### Useful reading

BBC (2007) Fees need not deter students. *BBC Education News*, 25 April.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6592043.stm> (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

Crace, J. (2006) Great aspirations: can a chat with MP David Lammy persuade pupils to aim for university? *The Guardian*, 6 June.

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/egweekly/story/0,,179065,00.html> (Accessed: 25 July 2007)

### Websites

Parish of St Clement & St James. Community development Project  
[www.clementjames.co.uk](http://www.clementjames.co.uk) (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

IntoUniversity

[www.intouniversity.org](http://www.intouniversity.org) (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

Sutton Trust

<http://www.suttontrust.com> (Accessed: 24 July 2007)

# Girls and exclusion: Why are we overlooking the experiences of half the school population?

**Abstract:** *In this article Audrey Osler argues that it is not only boys who experience problems with school. She explores the meaning of exclusion for girls and identifies the factors which enable girls to feel they belong and to achieve and those which lead to alienation and disaffection. The article looks at those types of exclusion, including self-exclusion, which are not recorded in the official statistics.*

**M**edia headlines suggest it is largely boys, and rarely girls, who experience problems at school. Recent research on the reasons behind low educational achievement was reported under the headline: “White boys are ‘low achievers’”. The article began:

*“Nearly half the students who leave education with no or limited qualifications are white British males ... The study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that three-quarters of low achievers in English schools are white British students and boys outnumber girls as poor performers by three to two.” (ITN news, 2007)*

In fact, the research, *Tackling Low Educational Achievement*, (Cassen and

## Audrey Osler

Audrey Osler is Professor of Education and founding Director of the Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights Education at the University of Leeds. She has published widely on citizenship, identities and human rights in education. Her most recent book is *Changing Citizenship: democracy and inclusion in education* (Open University Press, 2005). <http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/research/cchre/>

Kingdom, 2007) highlights problems faced by both boys and girls, and recognises that African Caribbean young people are those with the lowest average educational outcomes. Nevertheless, the media reinforce the widespread belief that girls have benefited most from efforts to raise standards. It also implies that concerns about black students' performance are misplaced and that we should now focus our attention on white males.

The media emphasis on boys is matched by a similar emphasis in official policy and advice to teachers. The Department for Children, Schools and Families Gender and Achievement site focuses on boys. Schools are perceived to be girl-friendly institutions and girls are judged less susceptible to behavioural difficulties.

School exclusion and low educational performance are closely linked. Media accounts support the view that exclusion is largely a male problem

**Girls' and boys' problems are categorised differently from each other, with consequent differences in the ways problems are measured and resources allocated.**

and that the story of girls' schooling is more or less an unqualified success. Media coverage tends to emphasise the apparent violent nature of excluded young males. (Parsons, 1999) Yet official statistics suggest reasons of verbal abuse or

violence are given for fewer than three out of ten students who are excluded. (DfES, 2006)

Girls have been largely overlooked in school exclusion prevention strategies and research. National statistics record disciplinary exclusions, with boys accounting for nearly four out of five students permanently excluded and three out of four cases of fixed term exclusion each year. (DfES, 2006) Yet 10,000 girls have been subject to permanent disciplinary exclusion in the five-year period from 2000/01 to 2004/05 in England. This amounts to the equivalent of the population of a small town. A significant number of these students effectively drop out of school.

**Researching exclusion**

My research on behalf of the Commission for Racial Equality not only confirmed the findings of other studies which indicate that black (African Caribbean) learners are many times more likely to be excluded than their white peers but indicated that the most important factor determining whether an individual is excluded is the school which s/he attends. Subsequently, I directed a project on behalf of the DfES on the reasons for exclusion which uncovered the growing phenomenon of unofficial (and unlawful) exclusion practised by headteachers. (Osler *et al*, 2000)

In order to understand girls' experiences of schooling and exclusion we interviewed 81 girls aged 13 to 15 years in six English localities. (Osler *et al*,

2002) The girls included those who were judged by teachers to be succeeding at school as well as those who had been excluded or were thought to be at risk of exclusion. We also interviewed 55 service providers, including teachers, social workers and health professionals.

## Excluding girls

### *Different behaviour patterns*

Our research highlights very different patterns of behaviour between boys and girls, which go a long way towards explaining the differentials in formal, disciplinary exclusion rates. For example, girls reported that when they got into trouble, rather than respond aggressively, they tended to adopt tactics such as apologising, crying or otherwise showing remorse:

*"Girls apologise ... and well, they can act innocent. They just, when they put a foot wrong, well they're just like 'Oh I'm sorry I didn't mean to do it, I'll never do it again', but with boys they're just like 'Yeah so what?'"*  
(Anna, permanently excluded student, attending PRU).

*"Girls, they can talk their way out of some things ... like they make excuses for themselves. And boys, when they get into trouble, they just make it worse by like shouting at the teacher and denying what they've done."*  
(Nicole, mainstream school, no exclusions).

Girls' ability to extricate themselves from trouble through such means was confirmed by professionals:

*"Part of the reason girls don't get excluded as much is because they are better at social skills. When they do get into bother they are much better at dropping the eyes and saying 'I'm sorry'"*  
(Member of behavioural support service).

### *Different perceptions of behaviour*

Girls' and boys' problems are categorised differently from each other, with consequent differences in the ways problems are measured and resources allocated. For example, suicide rates for girls and young women are low compared with those of boys. Yet if the problem is re-conceptualised to acknowledge the widespread problem of self-harm, the picture looks very different. Adolescent boys are more likely to commit suicide but girls and young women do attempt it. Three times more young women than young men engage in self-harming behaviour and the group most likely to do so are girls aged 13-15 years. (Meltzer *et al*, 2001)

At school level, the professionals we interviewed recognised ways in which similar behaviour is perceived in different ways, according to

whether the student in question is a boy or a girl:

*"I think there is an assumption that if a female is showing aggressive behaviours, it doesn't really fit in with the stereotype, so there must be something wrong here ... let's try and sort it out. But if a boy does the same thing then that's it, they're out."*  
(Educational psychologist).

Alternatively, some girls may be punished for behaviour which is considered "extreme":

*"Girls are greater victims of inconsistencies: there is a degree of intolerance but also a degree of shock and horror; they do not have the ability to be 'loveable rogues'"*  
(Head of PRU).

#### *Self-exclusion and bullying*

Girls' own accounts demonstrate reasons as to why they may self-exclude and how they withdraw from learning:

*"Some people ... if they have problems with like dyslexia and stuff, they are too shy to admit it because of what their friends will say, so they go on pretending that they can do the things and they're not getting the right help because no one knows they've got problems".*  
(Student in group interview, mainstream school).

*"I was getting called fat and everything and then ... [other students] they'd mostly swear at me and ... it was stupid but it really got on my nerves, so I didn't want to go."*  
(Emma, long-term non-attender).

#### *Friendship, reputation and bullying*

The girls spoke a great deal about bullying and described the exclusionary processes which girls show towards each other. Bullying was, for them, a key cause of exclusion, yet professionals failed to identify it as such. Girls placed considerable emphasis on "reputation", on friendship and on being liked. This requires them to present themselves as attractive to boys, but to avoid being labelled as promiscuous. They are expected to present a strong heterosexual identity, and to avoid any suggestion of lesbianism. They use friendship and the withholding of friendship as a means of exercising power and control. (Osler and Vincent, 2003)

The girls identified gender differences not only in the ways conflicts were expressed but also in the ways they are resolved:

*"If they [boys] are like having an argument with someone, they have to fight them."*

*They've got to be seen like as good in the eyes of their friends, and they think they'll get respect from everyone by fighting . . . Girls, they can think about things before they do it, and they don't fight as much, they're just more bitchy towards each other.*" (Fiona, mainstream school).

*"Girls always support each other. Whenever you have an argument or something, there's always sides to it and there's always one girl and her mates and the other girl with her posse of mates on the other side and as soon as the main girls make up, the groups are all right again. It always happens like that."* (Julie, mainstream school)

#### *Racism and exclusion*

Girls' accounts of bullying, harassment and exclusion revealed that sometimes there is a racist dimension to bullying and exclusion:

*"I don't think there should be racism in school. I was bullied when I was in Year 7 . . . um, you eat curries, you shouldn't be here, this isn't your country and things like that and I didn't really like that."* (Halima, mainstream school, no exclusions).

*"This girl kept making fun of me and saying that she was gong to beat me up. It was in one lesson, right from the start to the end of the lesson . . . and there were racial comments as well, calling me 'black bitch' and stuff."* (Daniela, mainstream school, some exclusions).

Daniela's account revealed how she had responded aggressively to bullying and was excluded for getting into a fight with a girl who had been taunting her. She provides us with some clues as to why black girls may be more vulnerable to exclusion than their white female peers. She believed the bullying that preceded her angry outburst was not taken into account. She felt she had no choice but to deal with the bully herself.

#### *Truancy and absenteeism*

Truancy was one form of self-exclusion which featured prominently in many girls' accounts. All but one of the girls reported that they had truanted at least once. A smaller but significant number reported missing extended periods of schooling. Girls reported two types of truancy: the first occurs from fear of attending school; truancy also occurs when the alternative to school appears more attractive.

*"I didn't really fit in, so I didn't want to go to school. Teachers wouldn't help me with my work. It really started from there."* (Belinda, self-excluder being educated in pupil referral unit).

*“Cause some [students] they have more fun sitting around someone’s house ... mainly drugs as well, ‘cause once you get into drugs and that, you just think ‘Oh school’s rubbish, you might as well go and have fun.”*

(Caroline, self-excluder with fixed term and permanent exclusions, mainstream school).

Evidence from both girls and professionals suggests that pregnancy is linked to school exclusion in complex ways. Although Government guidelines expressly state that pregnancy should not be a reason for disciplinary exclusion, in reality it often marks the end of an individual’s schooling. Many girls who become pregnant are already alienated from school. This account is one girl’s compassionate and sensitive explanation of how a classmate became excluded:

*“There was this girl and she started to get bullied because she was very big built and they used to call her fatty and everything ... but she wasn’t. Then she started skipping days off school. They just thought she was skipping days off because she didn’t like school. I think she missed 17 maybe 20 science lessons, then it was whole days, weeks and months. Then she left because she fell pregnant and then that was it. She’s trying to get into college but she hasn’t got any GCSEs and it’ll be hard because she’s got the baby. I really wanted her to have some more life. I wanted her to have an education ... to just have something to help her but she never managed it. She’s dyslexic as well but she’s not statemented. She just thought to herself she was thick and so she’d skip days off school.”*

(Sam, mainstream school).

Sam shows how bullying, absenteeism, unidentified special educational needs and, finally pregnancy and motherhood, combined to exclude one student. The example she provides is typical of the way in which many girls are excluded without having been subject to disciplinary process.

### **Rethinking exclusion**

Current official definitions of exclusion relate to disciplinary procedures. Since boys are more vulnerable to disciplinary exclusion, the support systems and alternative education schemes currently in place tend to be targeted at boys. So, for example, some schemes organised by voluntary sector agencies focus on boys’ sports and on activities traditionally associated with boys:

*“I’m thinking about the Key Stage 4 alternatives. I have an impression that a lot of the things that are organised are more appealing for boys, things like painting and decorating, car mechanics, bricklaying, woodwork, carpentry.”*

(Education welfare officer).

Even when provision is designed for both sexes, some professionals are reluctant to send girls to PRUs or other provision where boys make up the vast majority of learners. Similarly, some girls are reluctant to attend when they realise it will be dominated by boys.

Many girls who need alternative provision are not given priority because the pressure is to remove those students who cause teachers the greatest problems:

*“There’s someone I’m working with at the moment . . . she’s very emotionally distressed, as shown by crying, worrying, refusing to do her homework and those sorts of things. Whilst the school are concerned about her, it’s not as pressing as a six foot kid who’s throwing desks about.”*

(Educational psychologist)

*“The withdrawn child sitting quietly at the back is more likely to be female and is in a sense excluded.”*

(Educational psychologist)

I am arguing for a redefinition of school exclusion which builds upon girls’ experiences of schooling and acknowledges behaviour patterns more commonly found among girls. Redefining school exclusion to include girls’ experiences is critical. It is not merely a matter of semantics. Currently,

**Even when provision is designed for both sexes, some professionals are reluctant to send girls to PRUs or other provision where boys make up the vast majority of learners. Similarly, some girls are reluctant to attend when they realise it will be dominated by boys.**

resources aimed at disaffected learners are targeted at boys. Boys’ behaviour cannot be addressed in isolation, nor can that of girls. Girls’ behaviour and boys’ behaviour needs to be considered as part of a more complex whole. If exclusion is defined so as to include girls’ experiences then it is likely that resources designed to address disaffection will be more equitably distributed.

### **How can school be improved?**

Current official definitions of exclusion, built upon male experiences, have direct consequences for policy development and for the subsequent

allocation of resources. Many of the forms of disaffection and exclusion experienced by girls do not tend to have an immediate impact on teachers. Consequently, they do not attract the attention of the media or policy makers and they are generally not prioritised at school level.

Those working in child and adolescent mental health services reported an increase in the number of children being referred to them, at a younger age. It would appear that we have learnt not to take seriously the forms of psychological bullying and exclusion which girls employ. Teachers and other adults under-estimate the devastating effects which friendship break-ups can have on girls. Our research suggests that boys' needs and girls' needs cannot be seen as separate. We need to sensitise ourselves not only to different forms of exclusion but also to the different ways we respond to similar behaviours in girls and in boys. Early intervention strategies are critical to prevent the exclusion of girls and young women from school.

Girls made suggestions on how school might be improved to meet their needs. Drawing on their ideas, these are some of the key recommendations from our research:

- Schools should provide support (for example, a counsellor or school nurse) that can be accessed on a self-referral basis;
- Clear plans are needed for re-integrating all learners who have been out of school as a result of disciplinary exclusion, truancy, pregnancy, etc;
- Policies and practices which address bullying should acknowledge the psychological forms of bullying to which girls may be especially vulnerable;
- Schools need to address racial harassment as a specific form of bullying;
- Schools need to provide support and training to teachers so that they have the skills to identify learners experiencing difficulties and sufficient knowledge about sources of support;
- Interventions and support for individuals identified as vulnerable need to be discreet and sensitive as girls are often concerned about peer reputation;
- Effective learner consultation and participation procedures are critical (eg student councils, engagement in policy development) and need to be sensitive to the differing needs of girls and boys;
- Specific initiatives to support girls need to be sensitive to the differences in needs between girls related, for example, to ethnicity, sexuality, maturity and out-of-school responsibilities; and
- Access to support systems, alternative educational provision and other opportunities need to be monitored by gender and ethnicity.

## **References**

Cassen, R. and Kingdom, G. (2007) *Tackling low educational achievement*. York:

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation.  
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2063-education-schools-achievement.pdf> (Accessed: 13 July 2007)
- Department for Children, Schools and Families. The standards site. Gender and achievement: frequently asked questions.  
<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/genderandachievement/understanding/faqs/> (Accessed: 22 June 2007)
- Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Permanent and fixed period exclusions from school and exclusion appeals in England 2004/05*.  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000662/SFR24-2006.pdf> (Accessed: 18 July 2007)
- ITN News (2007) *White boys are 'low achievers'* Internet: 22 June.  
<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/itn/20070622/tuk-white-boys-are-low-achievers-dba1618.html> (Accessed: 22 June 2007)
- Meltzer, H., Harrington, R., Goodman, R. and Jenkins, R. (2001) *Children and adolescents who try to harm or kill themselves*. London: Office for National Statistics. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/child0801.pdf> (Accessed: 13 July 2007)
- Osler, A. (1997) *Exclusions from school and racial equality: research report*. London: Commission for Racial Equality.
- Osler, A. and Hill, J. (1999) Exclusion from school and racial equality: an examination of government proposals in the light of recent research evidence. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol.29 no.1, pp. 33-62.
- Osler, A. and Osler, C. (2002) Inclusion, exclusion and children's rights: a case study of a student with Asperger Syndrome. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, vol.7 no.1, pp. 35-54.
- Osler, A. and Vincent, K. (2003) *Girls and exclusion: rethinking the agenda*. London: RoutledgeFalmer. See also Hey, V. (1996) *The company she keeps: an ethnography of girls' friendship*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Osler, A., Watling, R. and Busher, H. (2000) *Reasons for exclusion from school*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Employment. (Research report; 244)  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR244.doc> (Accessed: 13 July 2007)
- Osler, A., Street, C., Lall, M. and Vincent, K. (2002) *Not a problem? Girls and school exclusion*. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Parsons, C. (1999) *Education, exclusion and citizenship*. London: Routledge.



# “‘T’ain’t what you do (it’s the way that you do it)”: Challenging the boys to do better

**Abstract:** *Seemingly, it is now white working class boys who form the largest group of underachievers nationally. Allison Crompton, Head Teacher of Middleton Technology School, Rochdale, looks at the issues facing these boys and their schools and shares with us her experiences of raising the achievement of white working class boys to among the highest in the country. Situated against a background of deprivation, and where the boys achieve as highly as the girls, Middleton Technology School is deemed to be an “outstanding” school in every measure. She explains what makes this school stand out from the crowd.*

I was never a fan of the band Fun Boy Three and in 1983 when their song “‘Tain’t what you do (it’s the way that you do it)” hit the top five in the UK I hadn’t even thought about a job let alone a career. Yet as I sat down to write this article I found myself humming that annoying refrain. Undoubtedly it is a cliché but, when applied in the context of white British working class boys and their educational achievement, it is also true.

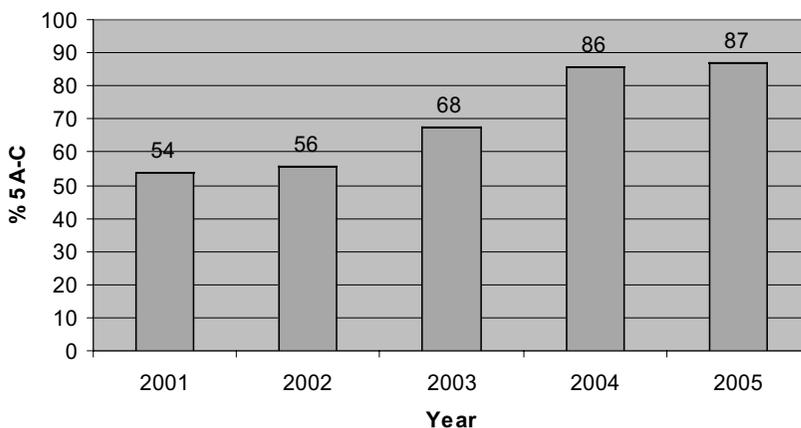
At Middleton Technology School (MTS) it is all about the way in which we do things with our boys that makes the difference. MTS is proof that boys can and do achieve if you have the highest expectations, the right

## Allison Crompton

Allison Crompton is head teacher of Middleton Technology School, Rochdale and is Chair of Rochdale Association of Secondary Head Teachers. Ofsted judged her as an outstanding head teacher in November 2006.

ethos, excellent teaching and appropriate support.

This year at MTS, the overall Contextual Value Added for boys was 1053; for girls it was 1028. In the last two years our percentage of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C Grade GCSEs peaked at 87 per cent (A\*-C including English and maths, 62 per cent). The boys are achieving just as well if not better than the girls.



The 2005 data illustrates the high level of attainment of boys within the school with 86.5 per cent of all boys achieving the benchmark of 5 GCSE passes at A\*-C and 98 per cent achieving at least 5 A\*-G. The 2005 contextual value added figure for Key Stages 2-4 reinforces the evidence for boys making progress at 1045.7.

### School Context

MTS is situated in Middleton North Ward in Rochdale Borough and succeeds against a background of deprivation. The area has higher than average unemployment, poor health indicators and more than 40 per cent of adults who have no qualifications. The percentages of adults with higher educational qualifications and from the higher social classes are below the national averages.

On the Deprivation Index we rank 4,149 out of 32,482 overall, with a rank of 5,038 on the income measure. Our rank for employment is 3,363 and for health and disability 2,413. The area also has a high proportion of lone parent families. Rochdale has an overall rank of 25 out of 125 local authorities. In other words the borough is the 25th most deprived in England.

Middleton is a small Lancashire town that forms one of the five townships that make up Rochdale borough. Not enough mills to call it a proper mill town of the twentieth century but enough to make sure there

is no real economic infrastructure other than warehousing in the twenty first. It is largely white and working class and the school population (94 per cent white British) reflects this.

Economic prospects in the area are slowly improving and this is beginning to have an impact on motivation. However, the past has established a cycle of low esteem and aspirations in the community. Many of our boys fit into that picture all too well. Most, if asked, aspire to be “a brickie, a plumber, a joiner or professional footballer.” Rarely will boys articulate a desire to go on to university and rarely do they aspire to the career of a professional in any sphere.

### **What is it about the boys?**

I think it is evident nationally, as increasingly more sophisticated ethnicity and achievement data is both available and subject to greater analysis, that white working class boys form the largest group of underachievers. They underachieve most highly at GCSE and I suspect gain the least amount of value added between Key Stages 2-3, 3-4 and 2-4. As the educational disadvantage of white working class boys is becoming better documented, so the questions about their underachievement are becoming more searching.

Our boys do not readily possess the qualities of reliability, perseverance and organisation. Add to that a poverty of language and literacy skills, the behavioural and cultural norms that are with them from birth and which definitely shape their attitudes to learning and the indifferent attitudes of some (not all) of their parents to educational success and you can see it takes more than lollipops and chocolate frogs in assembly to improve academic achievement.

### **In for the long haul**

The received wisdom about school effectiveness tells us that the intake of a school largely determines its effectiveness. I believe that underachievement is neither inevitable nor necessarily a consequence of gender or class. I am not trying to pretend that it is easy to tackle and it has taken almost 15 years of deeply concerted effort to bring about sustained changes in boys' attitudes to learning and achievement. Even so it is only in the last five years that we have really started to see steady improvements from our boys.

Any school that really wants sustained improvement in achievement knows they are in for the long haul. There are no genuinely quick fixes. If you have decided as a school that you're in for the long haul, then the first thing that has to happen is the school must declare a state of independence. Bizarre – surely it's all about working within the local community and context, getting parents on side? No it is not. The school

must determine the dominant culture and the culture outside the school gates must not intrude.

There is a dissonance for many of our boys in terms of attitude, behaviour, language and aspiration between parents, home, peer and social groupings and between the school. All children need very firm boundaries and often those boundaries outside of school, if they exist at all, are fluctuating and conflicting.

Many of our parents have poor self image as learners. They often say they “were thick at school” and didn’t achieve and enjoy. Parents often

## **The school must determine the dominant culture and the culture outside the school gates must not intrude.**

signal conflicting values in terms of acceptable behaviour. They will accept swearing, aggressive and hostile language as part of normal macho behaviour because that is the norm at home and on the streets. This is drawn in sharp relief for us

when we look at boys’ drinking habits. Drinking is seen as another macho activity, many go to the pub with their dad or extended male family groups and this is further compounded on the streets at weekend. The idea of supervised leisure is an alien one to many parents and their boys and therefore much of their free time is spent on the streets.

### **What comes first?**

It is up to the school to determine the dominant culture by not allowing a macho anti-school sub-culture to develop inside the school regardless of what is happening in the community. We go to great lengths to make sure that it is left at the school gates. In practice this means that the school must have a strong and robust ethos and stringent rules about the following:

- Wearing only the school uniform – for example, I do not allow any hooded clothing or any high priced fashion footwear. The first day of term three years ago I sent home probably 30 boys because they were wearing fashion shoes with a broad white flashing (the school rule is plain black shoes). All of them complied despite the ire and challenge of their parents and we have had little challenge since.
- Similarly students must not come to school with hair that is cut below a number two or appear with any extreme hairstyle. I explain to those students and their parents that groups of youths with shaved heads appear intimidating and I will not allow any groups in school to unite together to the detriment of other students. You can only imagine how that was received particularly when the fashion hair style of choice in the Premiership was for shaved heads. I wish I had a pound for every time I’d been told “it’s not what’s on their heads it’s what goes in that matters.” Rubbish! Every independent school in the land has elaborate

and stringent dress/appearance codes and it is also interesting to note that most of the newly formed Academies also emulate the private sector with regard to dress. Why should I expect less from my students?

- All students must come to school with a school bag and equipment everyday. If they don't I send them home to get said bag and equipment and they must then make up any time and work missed after school.
- I do not allow large groups of boys to congregate together and we are vigilant about any kind of "mob" or "gang" forming inside the school. Previously, I have separated groups of boys and determined where in the school certain boys may go and with how many "mates". If necessary, at social times they are instructed to stay under the direct supervision of a senior member of staff. (They soon get the message.)
- To do all of this, the senior leadership team must be visible and respond vigorously to any challenge. Our team is out in force each morning before school greeting the students as they arrive, at all social times and after school. We must lead by example; if the senior staff are proactive other staff will have the confidence to follow.

So, in summary, the first thing that must be done is to chip away the macho carapace which then allows our boys to conform to the school's expectations without the exerting influence of the streets.

### Targeting key leaders

Following the school's early progress in improving boys' achievement the DfES showed interest. This then led to involvement in a Cambridge University project on Raising Boys' Achievement run by their Faculty of Education and the school worked closely with Dr Ros McLellan. The project looked at the extent to which boys underachieve academically, explored the dilemmas and interpretations of this debate and also challenged some misconceptions. The research took place over four years and our focus was "The Socio-cultural Approach".

To quote from the report briefing:

*"It is self evident that some boys go to considerable lengths to protect their macho image and sense of self worth by indulging in a range of non-conformist behaviour which frequently prevents them and others in the same classes from achieving well."*

Our answer to this specific problem and a consequence of the work already done was to establish the key leader scheme. The essence of the scheme was to support those students, usually boys whose physical presence, manner and behaviour unduly influenced the peer group, ultimately to the detriment of exam success. This is our attempt to engage the key image-makers and incorporate them positively into the life of the school. Key

leaders are predominantly boys and tend to fall into one of the pen portraits below.

- *The Rebels* – Intelligent five A-C borderline and above students, who may mock others' work, disrupt lessons easily and may intimidate staff.
- *The Clowns* – usually immature boys who frequently act out inappropriate behaviour in the classroom, can incite others and set dares and challenges.
- *The Stars* – successful and popular students who are often good at sport and who could be encouraged to help other students. They may often possess good interpersonal skills.

The school set about targeting key leaders who are nearly always boys. These boys are often at risk of disassociating themselves from the school's values. These boys are given a great deal of time-attention, praise, encouragement and support. Their mentor is crucial. If these boys become disaffected they will take ten others with them!

Academic mentoring of underachievers takes place throughout the school but more specifically mentoring of key leaders begins as students progress into Key Stage 4. The identification process usually begins in the summer term of Year 10 and all staff are involved. Curriculum leaders ask

## **Every independent school in the land has elaborate and stringent dress/appearance codes and it is also interesting to note that most of the newly formed Academies also emulate the private sector with regard to dress. Why should I expect less from my students?**

departments for names of students they feel meet the criteria (see pen portraits). This information is then collated to identify a cohort of students. The greatest number of girls in this group has only ever been three.

We have tried a variety of methods for finding suitable mentors including allowing the boys to choose, using new, young staff, experienced classroom teachers and members of the senior management group. It is important to point out that at no time are the students made aware of their status as a key leader. Mentoring is available to every student in Year 11 if they so wish and students are encouraged to approach a member of staff of their choice to request this. The key leaders group is led to believe that members of staff have simply selected them for mentoring.

The most successful method for mentoring of the key leaders has usually been to use senior staff, possibly due to the nature of the students and the time that they require.

## Outcomes with key leaders

We have found that key leaders recognise that they are not achieving as well as they could and develop a willingness to seek help with their learning because they find that teachers or other adults in the school are approachable because of their mentoring experiences. The boys develop a realistic awareness of what they are capable of achieving and make real attempts to control their own behaviour and develop mechanisms to avoid conflict.

The Cambridge Research feedback contained student interviews which revealed that students were taking on board guidance from staff. Interviews published in the report show students repeating advice given to them regularly in assemblies or one to one mentoring sessions concerning the importance of achievement and its effect on their future career paths. The scheme showed greatest success when members of the senior leadership team took on the role as mentors. The students felt motivated and valued as a result of the scheme. The key leaders recognised the need for qualifications to enable them to break out of the cycle of poverty in the area. Our boys are given the opportunity to achieve and celebrate that achievement whilst being incorporated into the ethos of the school.

## Year 10 zero tolerance

The success of our key leaders scheme highlights the importance of proactive measures to deal with boys causing concern. In the academic year 2005-06 we had identified a cohort of students in Year 10 that was much larger than the key leaders group who were jeopardising the learning of others.

Following intense work by learning mentors, class teachers and the inclusion team, we realised that an alternative approach was needed. These students were spoken to as a group about the effect that they were having on the achievement of their peers and also their own achievement. They then entered a zero tolerance behaviour programme. They are monitored against a strict set of behavioural criteria for each lesson. If these students persist in preventing the learning of others, they are sent directly to the senior leader monitoring them, are placed in our inclusion unit and parents invited into school.

## Is it the way you do it then.....?

Well, I know that my humming of the Fun Boy 3 tune irritated the life out of folk and yes, I believe it is all about the way in which we do things with boys that makes the difference.

Schools must examine honestly what needs to be done to bypass all the barriers to learning and provide an environment of stability and

consistency by having clear and unequivocal expectations (see examples above).

To engage boys, there must be consistent routines in every classroom and learning activities delivered with pace and challenge which are taught using preferred learning styles. Mentoring helps with motivation and teaches boys how to manage their learning time effectively.

Every day you need to work on developing their qualities of perseverance, collaboration and cooperation and come up with a 101 ways for boys to embrace the values of achievement and teach explicitly how success can be achieved. The ethos of achievement must be constantly revisited and the C word must be consistency not complacency.

# From exclusion to empowerment: LGBT young people find their voice

**Abstract:** *Allsorts Youth Project works with lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) young people in Brighton and Hove. They provide a safe drop-in space and one-to-one support. They also enable LGBT young people to learn new skills and participate in a wide range of volunteering opportunities including delivering homophobia awareness workshops to their peers. **Marianne Lemond** and **Jess Wood** write about how the project makes a difference to LGBT young people and makes an impact on the wider community.*

*"We demand the right to go to school or college or work without fear of harassment, verbal or physical abuse, bullying or discrimination on the grounds of homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and prejudice."*

(Allsorts Youth Project Bill of LGBT Youth Rights)

**L**esbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) young people face homophobia, transphobia and biphobia at school, at college, in the street, at work and sometimes, worst of all, at home. Their world is filled with media magnified gender stereotypes and tales of celebrity heterosexuality or "homosexual" notoriety. It is hard to imagine a world where same-sex relationships are valued and celebrated despite recent changes in the law on civil partnership.

## Jess Wood

Jess Wood is the Co-founder and Director of Allsorts LGBT Youth Project.

## Marianne Lemond

Marianne Lemond is Volunteering Development Worker of Allsorts LGBT Youth Project.

Schools in particular are the sites of the least safety. "Gay" has become a standard word for something negative – how gay is that! Sit on the top of any school bus and it is bewildering to hear the unhealthy obsession young people have with all things "gay". Teachers also walk the corridors in fear – are you gay, sir? Well, yes I am. What then? We need to make our schools healthy places for non-LGBT students and safe places for everyone else.

If teachers cannot or will not challenge homophobic "humour", how then will they challenge homophobic bullying? If teachers, parents and governors fail to provide models of dignified and fearless responses to homophobia, who will? Put another way, what is the cost of "social/community cohesion" that includes LGBT youth and who is willing to pay it?

*Inclusion, diversity and cohesion* should not be post-modern, politically correct buzz-words. They should aspire to articulate in the places we work the old fashioned ideal of *justice*.

### **Impact of homophobia on LGBT youth**

The constant barrage of abuse in schools and elsewhere can lead to extreme social isolation and alienation from self. An LGBT young person may not be open about their identity. They may choose to go along with the crowd but what then lurks within? Home may not be a refuge. On the contrary, an older sister or father or carer, instead of sharing a heritage of survival strategies, may be the worst perpetrator.

Internalised homophobia is more dangerous than homophobia. Last year, two young people at Allsorts killed themselves and, in one snap-shot survey of 15 of our users aged 14-21, 60 per cent of the group said they had attempted suicide in the last year, 80 per cent of those more than once. Many more self-harm, or engage in damaging behaviours (unsafe sex, sale of sex, substance misuse). LGBT young people made up nearly a quarter of all youth homeless in Brighton and Hove. LGBT youth life, it seems, is not worth living.

### **Support work: drop-in, one-to-one support and residential**

Allsorts Youth Project was set up in 1999. Six paid staff and ten volunteers (themselves LGBT), support LGBT young people to survive beyond these crises. About 25 young people attend the project each week. Our drop-in and other group work helps to reduce isolation and exclusion by providing a safe and supported space for LGBT young people to meet other LGBT young people and enjoy themselves, be creative and learn new things. We run a programme of workshops and activities each week that range from a drama workshop to an evening celebrating the work of our LGBT youth forum or an arts based exploration of gender identity.

In addition to our drop-in, our youth support workers also provide

intensive one-to-one support for LGBT young people who are in crisis or need some additional support. These could be issues around sexual or mental health, problems with housing, homophobic bullying at school or work, family issues and so on. These one-to-one sessions give the young people an opportunity to share what is going on for them in more depth than is often possible in the drop-in, and to receive information about how Allsorts and other services can help them.

One of the young people, Rick, explains how the project has helped him. He had low self-esteem and was very nervous about coming to the drop-in for the first time. However, when he did come, he was struck by “the genuine warmth and kindness of the workers and volunteers, and of course, the fellow young people”. He gradually began to participate in the drop-in’s activities and make friends:

*“it was a great place to meet like-minded people, which for me developed into socialising outside of the Tuesday drop-in event, which was great as it added a whole new circle of friends”.*

He found that coming to the drop-in helped him to feel more positive about himself:

*“the main way in which it has helped me is by increasing my confidence, as well as helping me to feel happier about myself, by not feeling judged.”*

In his one-to-one sessions he was able to explore concerns he had about relationships and sexual health. The combination of receiving one-to-one support and attending the drop-in gradually increased Rick’s confidence and enabled him to move on to new opportunities in both his personal life and in education.

We also employ a specialist LGBT Connexions Personal Advisor to help marginalised LGBT young people re-engage in employment, education and training. The kind of impact this support can have is illustrated by Nadine’s experience. She was studying three AS levels but was thinking of dropping out of college and had a poor attendance record. The college referred her to our LGBT PA. She was living in supported lodgings, had a history of self-harming and substance misuse and suffered from panic attacks and depression.

Our PA supported her to meet with her college tutor, referred her to counselling, helped her write her art college application, helped her apply for funding for her course materials, developed her CV with her and helped her to apply for part-time employment. He also worked with her directly around her self-esteem and confidence issues. She finished her exams. She got her grant. She was accepted into college. She has a part-time job. She

attends counselling and not surprisingly, she is thriving.

We also regularly run residential. Alison had been on a long journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance before arriving at Allsorts. Coming out as transgender, had “*lift[ed] an enormous burden from her shoulders*” but this was just the first step. By the time she came to Allsorts, she had started taking hormone therapy but was awaiting surgery. Faced by transphobia in both the straight and the lesbian and gay community, Allsorts provided her with a safe, supportive environment. She commented:

*“the support workers and volunteers have been so helpful to me in ways I had not expected from them. One of the purposes of the drop-in is to be there as a safe space for young people, to me, it’s a sturdier bubble within the bubble of Brighton.”*

After attending the drop-in for a few months, Alison decided to go on our Young Women’s Residential in the summer of 2005. It was her first Allsorts residential, and she was very apprehensive. However, the residential exceeded her expectations:

*“It turned out the break away was the much needed time out from work that I had hoped for. The workshops [on gender identity] were far from the dull and boring exercises that I had imagined possible, in fact they allowed my inner spirit to emerge. One of the highlights of the trip was the night hike. To be out in the countryside surrounded by woodland felt so soothing to my soul, bringing myself closer to nature, and the experience was intensified once darkness had fallen.”*

Since the residential, Alison has flourished. She has become very active at Allsorts, raising awareness about transphobia and helping us to make our service more inclusive of transgender people. She is now exploring the possibility of going to university to study politics.

### **From exclusion to empowerment: youth volunteering at Allsorts**

Allsorts was set up to provide crisis support. In 2005, we received funding from Volunteering England to develop volunteering opportunities for the young people to help them learn new skills and enhance their education and job prospects.

One young person who has become very involved in all kinds of projects at Allsorts has been Simon. He experienced severe homophobic bullying at school and this had a devastating impact on all areas of his life:

*“Not only did the bullying knock my self-esteem and confidence, it deeply affected my school work too, which for an aspiring pupil with ambition, can be truly devastating – and even more so when you are gay and in the ‘closet’.”*

As a result of the bullying, he left school at 16. His father was also very homophobic which led to Simon feeling unsafe at home. Eventually he left home and ended up in supported housing. He came to Allsorts for the first time in 2005 and quickly became involved in all our various activities. He was keen to turn his negative experiences into something positive and to help those who had also been subjected to homophobic bullying.

He helped to set up the youth forum, Young People's Voice (YPV), and became one of its co-chairs. The forum represents the views of Allsorts young people to the project's management committee as well as to the wider community, and organises events and activities at the drop-in. Simon was instrumental in organising YPV's first major event, an LGBT Youth Conference and Prom. He also gave a speech at the I-Power Anti-bullying Conference in November 2005 and helped staff deliver numerous homophobia awareness workshops to young people at a local sixth-form college. Simon was also a member of an LGBT youth delegation from Allsorts that had a face to face consultancy meeting in Westminster with the then Minister for Youth and Connexions.

Simon commented:

*"It's great that I have been able to be involved with various Allsorts projects, as it has given me the platform to get my voice, views and experiences heard, as well as giving me the support I need."*

As a result of volunteering for Allsorts, Simon has acquired a range of useful skills such as project management, PR skills, leadership and training skills and these have helped him access other opportunities including paid work for the organisation that originally gave the YPV funding for their Conference and Prom and a regular column in a local LGBT magazine.

## **Peer-education**

Supporting LGBT young people is only one part of our work. We also want to tackle the root causes of their suffering: the homophobia and transphobia that they face in education and the wider community. Over the last two years we have developed a homophobia awareness peer education project.

Allsorts young people have helped staff and volunteers to design and deliver homophobia awareness workshops for young people at local schools, colleges and youth projects. Issues we explore include stereotypes of LGBT people, the impact of homophobic bullying and the negative effect that the phrase "that's so gay" has on LGBT young people. We have received excellent feedback from both the workshop participants and their teachers/youth workers:

*"I think discussions like these are helpful to those confused about their sexuality. There should be more of these to promote homosexuality as a good thing, and so people have better understanding and tolerance."*

*"Made me think, particularly about the term 'that's so gay'."*

*"You're very open and friendly. The activity about name calling opened my eyes as to just how mean people (and I) can be sometimes."*

We believe this kind of awareness-raising work is crucial to creating better social cohesion. Not only is it important for the sake of LGBT young people's mental health but it is also important for their heterosexual peers. As our society becomes more diverse, young people's success in the workplace and the wider world depends increasingly on their ability to mix with people from a wide range of backgrounds.

Finally, in any group or class of thirty young people at least two of them are LGBT. You may not know who they are. But they are there and they need your support. We offer workshops and training days for teachers, Connexions PAs, social workers, fosters carers, housing workers – anyone who works with young people – so that all staff are better equipped both to challenge homophobia and support the LGBT youth in their care.

We provide a range of LGBT youth resources including posters, stickers, postcards, coming out booklet, workshop toolkit and two anthologies of LGBT youth writings. These have been disseminated nationally and we act as consultants to both local and national government.

## **Conclusion**

As LGBT young people spend more time at the project, they begin to find themselves and see in others like them, reflections of new possibilities for themselves and their future. They journey further and further away from being victimised by homophobia towards empowered citizenship of a diverse and inclusive world. They are proud of who they are and clear that all the different communities of which they are part have a responsibility to tackle the causes of their continual exclusion.

More information and resources for working with LGBT youth and raising awareness about homophobia and transphobia can be downloaded from their website [www.allsortsyouth.org.uk](http://www.allsortsyouth.org.uk).

# Chickenshed – “Theatre that defies theatre” – and education!

***Abstract:** The inclusive theatre company, Chickenshed, undertakes pioneering education work with young people with disabilities to encourage them to express themselves creatively through theatre and the performing arts, using prose and poetry, music and movement. Paul Morrall describes how theatre is integral to education and tells the personal stories of some young people who have been inspired themselves and inspired others through the inclusive approach of the company. The work that Chickenshed has done in schools, both special and mainstream, advantaged and disadvantaged, is also outlined, with a plea for theatre and the performing arts to become an essential part of the curriculum – the fourth R.*

**M**any apologies in advance for the slightly uncompromising nature of this article and the lack of time and space to qualify absolutely everything within it. When the NUT gives you 2,000 words to get across an inclusive philosophy of theatre and education built painstakingly over 33 years – you have to seize the moment and apologise afterwards.

So there is no space really to elaborate at all in this submission. Suffice it to say that at Chickenshed, we feel, as demonstrated by our practice, that theatre is integral to education and vice versa. We always have. We also believe that inclusive theatre inspiring an inclusive approach to education

## Paul Morrall

Paul Morrall is Director of Education and Outreach at Chickenshed. Chickenshed's website is: [www.chickenshed.org.uk](http://www.chickenshed.org.uk)

can play an absolutely central role in the provision of excellence in education that we are all seeking.

Yet, how can a philosophy and practice of inclusive theatre inspiring a passion for inclusion impact on education? What barriers exist for teachers and theatre companies in furthering and implementing these ideas and how can the real stories of individuals help us forge ways over or round these barriers and turn them into opportunities? How can we look at the personal stories of individuals, their accessing of learning and their exercising of creativity? How can their knowledge and uniqueness of experience support us – rather than limiting ourselves and the individuals themselves to how we can support them?

So let's start with the barriers. The National Curriculum. Now there's a barrier!! Its public mask says it is an entitlement – but not far underneath the surface it becomes a barrier – a barrier that everyone is entitled to.

If you want to research the reasons why the National Curriculum is potentially an understanding-denying straightjacket which fails a large minority and barely satisfies a small majority, then read Rhys Griffith's book, *National Curriculum – National Disaster*. He says the stated aim of the National Curriculum is to promote 'experiential' and 'whole person' growth but:

*“The assessment driven curriculum demands didactic drill training to ensure examination success and such a pedagogy suppresses the development of a critical disposition so that the school leaver becomes a passive serf or discontented outlaw rather than an emancipated citizen and productive worker.”* (Griffiths, 2000)

So how can individual stories support us in overcoming barriers to making genuinely inclusive curricula in genuinely inclusive schools?

### **Individual stories**

What about Paula Rees' story? Due to the severity of Paula's cerebral palsy, but more due to the obsession of educational and medical/psychology professionals for equating minimal movement with minimal intelligence, Paula was considered as not warranting an inclusive education experience. This was sacrificed for the imposition of a segregated maximum care/minimum education experience. Yet Paula is a creative genius. Whilst professionals refused to adapt curricula and the creative communication channels needed to access them for the mutual benefit of both Paula and her potential peers, Paula was writing words such as these:

*“Do not let the anger and sadness of the people – make you different.*

*Say that you will always stay the same – forever knowing – forever believing.*

*We are, losers in the game and if we don't say how we feel. No-one will know how laughing can seal.*

*So let them speak of sadness and joy.” (Paula Rees)*

Paula writes words which become lyrics, which become songs, which become improvised and then choreographed movement, which become performances. Paula's curriculum is Chickenshed and its creative staff, students, members and Chickenshed's curriculum is Paula. Paula's Writing in Residence output – lyrical and otherwise, changes and has always changed Chickenshed's artistic, movement, music, direction and education curriculum. Without those changes, the quality of work for the whole company would be affected and lessened.

Paula's work has helped take Chickenshed's director of music and the company's choreographer to new levels of excellence. Her writings on movement and how she likes to access movement, her lyrics themselves and her physical movement contributions partnering others has supported Loren, for example, a Chickenshed-trained dancer of the highest artistic quality.

## **Group dynamics**

Yet sometimes it is more beneficial to look at small group stories – rather than individual ones to see how the combined qualities of individuals and their impact on each other can support the improvements in curriculum quality and student achievement we are always after.

Matthew, Mark and Julian are Chickenshed students – all of whom struggled educationally for various reasons. Each was compressed into and made to fit rigid curriculum structures in different mainstream and special settings – but have found their communication with each other as a key to unlocking quality learning and achievement.

Matthew's cerebral palsy affects his physicality, posture movement and vocal strength. This has often masked him being seen for his immense creativity, his inclusive intelligence, his passionate, almost dramatic eloquence in debate and discussion and his high quality improvising and performance. Matthew spent his pre-Chickenshed education flitting between special and mainstream organisations with an inclusive organisation being what was really needed.

Mark comes from a mainstream background – with a formal academic intelligence of the highest standard but with a passion and need to include and be included. The resultant creative communication is needed to ignite his intelligence fully and take it further.

Julian's needs if categorised would lie on the autistic spectrum. He is a model of sociability but finds conventional, over-formal approaches to

knowledge and learning induce acute anxiety and a locking-in of the natural communication and acting/performance intelligence which he needs to thrive. Julian's special schooling has possibly cushioned him from harsh mainstream reality but it is the open creativity of a genuinely inclusive environment which allows his gifts to flourish.

Mark needs Matthew's passion and improvisational energy and Julian's questioning curiosity to fire his communication, intelligence and ability to think outside and around the box. Matthew needs Mark's clarity and formal knowledge to add depth to his instinctive creativity. Matthew also needs Julian's artistic edginess, precision and nervous energy so that he can inspire calmness and belief in the group's work. Julian needs Mark's sense of structure to motivate him to find his own thought structure whilst also needing Matthew's creative energy and commitment to be communicated so he can use it to cement his own commitment and overcome doubts.

Chickenshed's educational and artistic work needs the interaction of these individuals to ensure that a vibrant, ever-changing, ever-motivating, ever-achievement-increasing curriculum can develop and mould around their learning approaches as individuals and as a group.

And what of the mutuality of creative and learning benefit achieved by the partnership of Richard, a Chickenshed-trained professional dancer and

Diana, a dancer conventionally trained to the highest level, with Brian. Brian is a Chickenshed performer whose instinctive but focused ability to learn high quality movement and acting is often not acknowledged as judgements are made about his

## **How can these personal stories and a multitude of others support us in creating a quality curriculum of the future which can house their aspirations and inspirations?**

having Down's Syndrome. Their abilities and inclusive partnership pose powerful learning arguments which Chickenshed needs to have with itself to develop artistically.

Whilst the story of Emily – a student whose mainstream school actively campaigned to exclude her because of her Down's Syndrome (surveying teachers publicly and providing statement contributions which were 98 per cent negative and 100 per cent educationally inaccurate) – gives Chickenshed the opportunity to continually open up its formal, academic curriculum as well as its creative structures. Emily was mistakenly and outrageously given a reading age of five at the age of 13 when simultaneously at Chickenshed she was reading *Romeo and Juliet* and *1984* – inspired by performances linked to explorations of these texts.

### **Curriculum “takeovers”**

With all these individuals their passion for, and abilities in, artistic creative

intelligence, inclusive intelligence, and open, mutual sharing of achievement and need propel the dynamism of constant structured successful curricular change at Chickenshed.

Chickenshed is proud to have modelled this work in school partnerships – linked across the so-called ‘mainstream’ and ‘special’ and ‘disadvantaged/advantaged’ sectors. The company asks for partnership and a passionate belief in the ability of all when working with schools. For example, school ‘takeovers’ use performing arts and theatre to lead the temporary adaptability and flexibility of the curriculum in all or most subjects within an organisation for a period of time.

We campaign for the reassessment of a curriculum which squeezes out a ‘performing arts and creativity across the curriculum approach’ by asking subject areas to complete certain ‘Deadwood’ elements of programmes of study. ‘Deadwood’ is classified as a body of knowledge likely to have little or no relation to children’s real, creative, leisure or communicating lives now or in the future as adults.

We give teachers and other educational professionals Key Stage 1-based tests to demonstrate how little of the knowledge we force into children’s minds we remember ourselves as adults. We also give professionals the compulsory British Nationality Status Citizenship Test to demonstrate the unjustness of a ‘curriculum’ and its ‘assessment’ where those applying for citizenship need to achieve a 70 per cent assessment of highly obscure ‘Britishness’ knowledge. No teacher or professional in Britain in our tests so far has been able to achieve more than 40 per cent.

### **The fourth R**

So how can the lessons learned from a company such as Chickenshed, operating with an inclusive creative process, inform an ongoing debate about the need for curricular excellence and change? How can these personal stories and a multitude of others support us in creating a quality curriculum of the future which can house their aspirations and inspirations? By demonstrating, stating, and then restating, the need for theatre and performing arts linked to genuine inclusion to take its proper place in the curriculum is a start.

Theatre and performing arts to Chickenshed are core skills – no less. They are a basic – the fourth R. Communication and creative communication are core elements of learning and experience – yet we pretend that reading, writing, number and IT covers it all. They do not. They are vital but need to be informed by communication, creative communication, empathy, simulation and the visual picturing of concepts, issues and debate, with the theatre and performing arts being the ideal area to develop these skills.

Chickenshed’s inclusive theatre process places theatre, performing arts

and inclusion and the creative communication and expression they celebrate at the heart of the learning experience. This learning experience involves individuals genuinely learning about each other in order to learn about themselves.

### **Using an inclusive performing arts approach**

When and where do you need this core of all core experiences: inclusive theatre and performing arts? You need it when as a teacher you are grappling with Piaget's early operational stages – trying to offer young children learning through physical, practical experience of concepts but without the time, resources or means to organise those practical experiences. Too often we resort straight to verbal or textual explanation when a dramatic/movement inspired exploration could be understood, internalised, pictured and remembered.

We need this inclusive performing arts creative process when we, as education practitioners, are looking for a successful 'across the curriculum' approach to learning. The inclusive theatre workshop method could explore, physically recreate, empathise with, visually picture and manipulate concepts in learning which would otherwise remain as 'Deadwood'. Too often the current curriculum leaves a large minority disengaged from education.

We need this inclusive performing arts creative process when we are redesigning the curriculum to remove the 'Deadwood' barriers to development and inclusion in subjects.

### **.... an awareness of how much more children learn from each other than from adults.**

We need learning experiences more closely linked to children's real experience and their potential experiences of the subject which need creative simulation and empathetic understanding to ignite learning. We need to know that we are not, for example, teaching all children to do maths in order to be mathematicians. We are teaching them rather to engage with the realities of maths concepts as actually experienced and ultimately understood. This applies too for other subjects.

We need an inclusive theatre creative process as used by Chickenshed in all subjects involving the widest range of individuals, irrespective of perceived 'need' or 'ability'. Because of Chickenshed's inclusion and inclusive creative process, we extend, widen, deepen and improve our theatre by for example:

1. Finding new ways to communicate theatre and art, script and song through signing, enriching choreography and dramatic speech, as well as a new movement vocabulary which creates new dimensions in dance by beginning with the individual.

2. Enabling the idea of 'support' to become creative with performance released by linking learning levels and variations in pace with movement workshops involving everyone leading and everyone following. Not support but art – not one way but every way.

There are many other examples at Chickenshed of how stepping back and re-evaluating our theatre and our technique in the light of those at the receiving end, both individuals and groups, has led to a greater excellence of work and teaching.

And lastly, the inclusive dimension to our theatre work has opened up an awareness of how much more children learn from each other than from adults. How the passing on of skills and learning and the sharing of learning is as important as the acquisition of learning. We have learned how older children can support younger children in inclusive skills development – not just in paired reading but in every area of learning – in our case theatre, performing arts and performing arts education. Yes, the theatre workshop can be the spearhead – but today the theatre workshop; tomorrow the curriculum.

We need inclusive theatre and performing arts to empower teachers and education leaders to change a curriculum that actively promotes exclusion and segregation and prevents a positive merging of mainstream and special systems. This would allow a team teaching approach to prepare the way for the 0.56\* children from a special school who would be added to every class in the country if genuine organisational inclusion happened now. That's 0.56 children per class! (\* Figures obtained from an average London LEA)

We need inclusive theatre to lead the way in demonstrating that obsessive hierarchies of 'ability' are irrelevant, obsolete, potentially destructive and denying of real quality. Ability is wide, not deep. Ability is different not gradable. Ability is inclusive, not excluding. There is no time, I repeat, to qualify all this – but contact us and the debate goes on.

# Book reviews

## EDUCATION BY NUMBERS: THE TYRANNY OF TESTING

Warwick Mansell

*Politico's Publishing Ltd 2007 £19.99 ISBN: 978-1-84275-199-2*

### Colin Richards

Colin Richards is Emeritus Professor, University of Cumbria and a former Senior HMI

Only a Martian, totally unacquainted with the mysteries of the English education system, could validly and objectively assess the absurdities and perversities surrounding our current testing regime. Warwick Mansell is the nearest we have to a Martian. He is a self-styled 'outsider to teaching' who is able to observe and comment with a measure of detachment not given to those of us embroiled professionally in the day-to-day business of schools. He comments incisively, pointedly and memorably. His critique is a devastating one for those who pin their faith on what he calls 'the tyranny of testing' – almost as devastating as the effects of testing on the tested which he graphically portrays.

The title (with its sub-title) says it all, though it would have been even more telling with a question mark after 'Numbers'. Citing up-to-date research and other evidence he has unearthed himself, Warwick Mansell catalogues the educational implications of placing so much emphasis on test results as the sole or main criterion for determining educational standards and quality. He invents the term "hyper-accountability" to characterise the phenomenon which has led to English (not Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish) pupils being the most tested in the world. He sees hyper-accountability as "a political, not an educational, process" which needs radical change. He provides a very compelling case using language which parents, policy-makers and teachers can readily understand and cites graphic examples which are frighteningly convincing.

Importantly, his book focuses on pupils, not on teachers, and illustrates how ministers, civil servants and government quangos 'put their own interests, in defending this regime, above those of the pupils.' He illustrates how test and exam results are being used to define what constitutes good schooling and good teaching at the expense of the long-term interests of pupils. He discusses the invidious effects of test preparation on anxious children and on the narrow curriculum they are too often offered as the time for national testing looms. He attacks the way hyper-accountability has corrupted course work; exam board and government guidance; choice of courses for GCSE; targeting of 'borderline'

pupils; and the taking of re-sits. He goes beyond offering a well-informed critique to suggest possible ways forward to policy-makers.

Warwick Mansell argues not against testing per se, nor against holding teachers accountable but against a regime that subordinates qualitative assessments of pupil and school performance to numerical indicators of dubious educational value. In a short but very important chapter he lists a large number of crucially important aspects of education which statistics ignore. He comments that, "the question is not whether there should be accountability but whether the current form is working to the advantage of pupils and the country as a whole". He answers with a convincing negative judgement.

Almost inevitably the book has some minor limitations. The author is not critical enough of some of the research (including comparative studies) he cites. He does not sufficiently address the issue of what constitutes 'standards' and the severe limitations of tests as so-called 'measures' of them. Towards the end of the book he devotes an unnecessary amount of space on reiterating his already well-rehearsed and (to this reviewer) thoroughly convincing arguments.

The book deserves to be widely read and acted upon. More particularly, its publisher needs to bring out a shorter paperback version very quickly with that question mark in the title. After all, what the book does most eloquently is to place a huge question mark on our tyrannous testing regime.

---

## **BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIERS TO BOYS' ACHIEVEMENT**

Gary Wilson

Network Continuum Education 2006 £24.99 ISBN 978-1855-39211-3

This publication, *Breaking Through the Barriers to Boys' Achievement*, is timely. The sub-title, *Developing a Caring Masculinity*, is what interested me in this area of education. I have few comments to make about Gary Wilson's overall approach to education issues and helping boys achieve. In this respect, his approach is creative, energetic, enthusiastic and dynamic. However, the issue of boys and masculinity is likely to emerge as a critical area in relation to learning and education and it would seem this area is full of contradictions.

Government is concerned about boys. They are anxious about gangs and worried about what is happening on the street. They also want boys to read more and are providing incentives for schools to purchase a number of books that will appeal to boys – usually 'action' books about violence and gang warfare. It is a terrible conundrum when we think about boys' achievement and masculinity. There are numerous ideas in the second part

---

### **Jim Wild**

Jim Wild is Convenor of the first Unit for Critical Studies in Men and Masculinities at Nottingham Trent University. He is also course leader for the first academic qualification in working with men in social care.

of this book which are commendable and very interesting. Our problem is one of transformational processes and where to begin. I wonder whether one of the first questions we need to ask is about essentialism and social construction of gender. What do teachers believe are the answers to this fundamental question? What do parents think the answer is to this question? Many people are concerned about boys, but the debate seems very quiet when it comes to talking about boys and masculinity.

This book provides helpful 'bite-size' suggestions to tackle areas relating to boys and masculinity. It does not explore the notion of masculinity as a concept, more a reality we have to live with. It's a terrible uphill task. I do not work in a classroom, but teach in a University. I cannot imagine what it must be like to teach a class where at least a third of the pupils have a sense that education is not giving them anything. I do, however, know that boys in this situation will cling to their masculinity in negative ways to legitimise their sense of self.

This book attempts to provide solutions for these boys but in a climate where organised education is not working for them. Where debates about masculinity are not yet apparent in Government while we increasingly see boys in communities of widespread social exclusion defiantly standing their ground in relation to male heterosexuality – which often means using violence. This book is, in many ways, ahead of its time. Gary Wilson should be placed somewhere of influence to Government because his thoughts about boys and masculinity are radical and innovative.

---

## UNDERSTANDING 4-5 YEAR OLDS

Lesley Maroni

Jessica Kingsley Publishing 2007 £8.99 ISBN: 9781843105343

This book provides an insight into the thought processes and anxieties faced by four and five year old children as they strive to cope with their expanding world. Lesley Maroni, from the Tavistock Clinic, explores some of the reasons for these anxieties and explains, using a range of examples, ways in which children overcome these challenges.

*Understanding 4-5 Year Olds* should more accurately be entitled 'Beginning an Understanding of 4-5 Year Olds' as it provides more of a snapshot of the mental and emotional development of this age group than an 'understanding'. The book is, however, an accessible read and can be dipped into easily as the content of each chapter is clearly outlined at the beginning.

In such a short book it is inevitable that each area could not be covered in great depth; but, for parents in particular, it may provide insights into their child's behaviour which could allay their own fears and anxieties.

There is a useful section on references and further reading which

---

### Judy Ellerby

Judy Ellerby is Professional Assistant (Primary) in the Education and Equal Opportunities Department, National Union of Teachers

comprises a list of reference books on child psychology and behaviour as well as books to read with children which explore particular fears and anxieties through the medium of story. Early years and infant teachers will not be surprised to see old favourites such as *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* and *Owl Babies* included in this section. Following this is a list of 'Helpful Organisations' which includes a brief description of each organisation's key area of expertise.

The book is interesting as an overview of some child development issues facing four and five year olds but it is unclear whether the assertions made by the author are based on research evidence or simply her opinion. Some of the examples given about gender stereotypes are so generalised as to be unhelpful. One such example is, "*Sometimes mothers themselves find it difficult to own the part of them that might be more strict and firm, preferring to attribute these qualities to the father*". Throughout the book, the 'two-parent family' model is used as the author claims that this is the model which children themselves have in mind. Increasingly in schools, however, teachers are trying to reassure children that there is a range of family models which are all legitimate and acceptable. The book does not address this issue.

As a prompt for discussion on child development amongst practitioners, this book has some value but I do not believe that it would provide the practical, informative guidance that many teachers, particularly those newly qualified, who may feel that they required in gaining a greater understanding of working with four and five year old children. The format and content suggest that the book is aimed more at parents than practitioners, although it claims on the cover to be aimed at parents, educators and carers.

The book has six chapters which cover the following subject areas: family life; school and the wider world; social development; books and reading to your child; anxieties and worries; and moving on. Each chapter is divided into subsections which include subjects such as, sibling rivalry, loneliness versus being alone, imaginative play and the need for boundaries. The sections each include an outline description of the behaviours, followed by illustrative examples and then some discussion as to why such behaviours occurred.

It is written in such a way that the reader is not required to read from beginning to end – although it would not be onerous to do so – but can refer simply to the section of interest.

As part of the wider 'Understanding Children' series, this publication would be a useful addition to a staffroom library as it provides an easily accessible reference starting point of explanations for a range of four and five year olds' behaviours and emotional anxieties.

## LOOKING AT INCLUSION LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Ruth MacConville

Paul Chapman Publishing 2007 £17.99 ISBN: 978-1-4129-1911-1

One of the fundamental principles of the SEN Code of Practice, (2001) is that 'the views of the child should be sought and taken into account'. The same document dedicated Chapter 3 to the subject of pupil participation and, in the intervening years, practitioners have been encouraged to 'hear' the voice of the child/young person. The Every Child Matters agenda has also emphasised the importance of this for all children, including children with SEN and disabilities. As a result, this book is most welcome, since, in many contexts, practitioners are still 'doing it to them' (in their best possible interests).

I knew of the excellent work being developed by the London Borough of Ealing through attending a presentation at a SENCO conference and had seen and heard on DVD the voices of some of the children/young people, who feature in this book.

Therefore, I looked forward to reading the full story and it was a fascinating read. It was a case of being forced to hear the voices of the children and young people even when, as a practitioner, I didn't really want to hear their criticism of our carefully organised strategies and approaches. The book was moving as the children/young people revealed their innermost feelings about their experiences of mainstream schools. I felt ashamed to realise that if only we adults had taken the time to ask, we could have avoided much of the stress and unhappiness experienced by the children and young people.

It also made me angry to read about some teachers who, despite all the careful preparations and training, refuse to take their responsibilities to all children seriously and then excuse their shortcomings by blaming the children/young people for being difficult or lazy.

This is a book about mainstream inclusion but in the context of an ongoing debate about the pros and cons of inclusion in mainstream schools for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. It does not take a moral standpoint about mainstream inclusion. In particular, the chapter on including pupils with hearing impairment contains some references to children/young people who desperately want to move to a special school due to their isolation within their mainstream schools.

Ruth MacConville does not just present the views of the children/young people. She goes beyond and gives numerous examples of practice which schools can adopt to address the issues raised. Most of these examples do not involve major reorganisation of the learning environment or massive amounts of additional adult support; but are clearly reasonable adjustments which all mainstream schools could make if they were really

### Mary Hrekow

Mary Hrekow has taught in many mainstream and special settings and been an adviser and inspector. She recently tutored a 'Provision Mapping' course for the NUT's CPD Programme.

committed to the effective inclusion of all their pupils. In particular, the importance of a range of peer support groups features in every chapter and illustrations of the difference these can make to how the children/young people feel about school and themselves. This book provides a rich resource for mainstream schools as they consider their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and the content of their school accessibility plans.

I am tempted to say that this book should be compulsory reading for all mainstream teachers; however this would not be a realistic aim considering time pressures in schools. However, I would recommend it as compulsory reading for all inclusion managers and SENCOs. It provides rich materials that could be used as part of a range of professional development opportunities: whole school CPD for teachers and support staff; support for individual teachers and support staff in terms of their own practice or with reference to an individual or group of pupils; as part of a leadership/senior manager focus on inclusion – the list is endless.

For me, the book emphasises the crucial role of leadership/senior management team in monitoring and evaluation in the area of inclusive practice. There are numerous examples given by the children/young people of the teachers, who really go the extra mile to understand their needs and meet them and employ robust monitoring and evaluation procedures. These would provide the opportunity for schools to recognise and celebrate similar examples. At the other end of the scale, there are the teachers who refuse to accept their responsibilities. Such as the teacher who, despite there being a note from the SENCO explaining that a pupil with visual impairments had to leave the room and enlarge printed work, refused to let the pupil leave; and the teachers who fail to provide printed copies of board work or accuse pupils of laziness when there is clear evidence that they have significant learning difficulties and are working harder than most pupils to produce less work.

This book provides a wealth of material for any school undertaking a much needed review of the deployment and use of teaching assistants as recommended by OFSTED in the report, *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?* (OFSTED, 2006). The comments of the children and young people about both the usefulness and uselessness of teaching assistants are so insightful.

The frustration experienced by not being allowed enough independence is expressed powerfully in a poem by a Year 10 pupil entitled 'Blessing'. This poem should definitely be required reading for all TAs! The book clearly demonstrates that the most effective way to review the effectiveness of TAs in a mainstream school would be to ask the children/young people what they think.

The book combines the theoretical with the practical. It is full of extensive references to research in support of what is proposed and these

references would be invaluable to a school looking to include a child/young person with a special educational need/disability for the first time or to undertake a focused review of a particular area of need, such as ASD or SpLD. In addition, a list of useful websites is included at the end of each chapter for further reference.

I have two small reservations about the way in which the book is structured. Chapter 1, 'Setting the Scene' explains the background to the 'framework for thinking' that underpins work in Ealing and the 'cycle of development' which is linked to self-esteem and emphasises the importance of addressing pupils' social and emotional development. This was interesting reading but my worry is that this chapter might put some readers off if they are looking for a book with practical advice. My advice to readers is: don't give up, the subsequent chapters immediately plunge the reader into hearing the voices of the children and young people coupled with numerous examples of what schools can do to respond to those voices.

My other reservation concerns the division of the book into chapters which deal with the five disabilities covered by the Ealing team. These are autistic spectrum disorder, visual impairment, specific learning difficulties, hearing impairment and physical disabilities. So many of the messages of this book relate to ALL areas of SEN/disability. Also, other common areas of need such as social, emotional and behavioural development, speech, language and communication difficulties and moderate learning difficulties are not included and these are often the areas of need most in evidence in mainstream schools and which are most challenging for mainstream schools to address.

In conclusion, the message of this excellent book for me is that if we are serious about getting inclusion right then we should start by asking the children and young people and acting on the clear messages they give us.

---

## **RESOLVING BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS IN YOUR SCHOOL: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF**

Chris Lee

Sage Publications 2007 £17.99 ISBN: 1-4129-2414-6

A cursory glance at the title of this book produced an audible groan. Here, I thought, is another book for school staff with a range of tips and tricks to deal with troublesome pupils. After reading the first few pages, I realised that nothing could be further from the truth.

I found this book to be thoughtful and thought-provoking, written by an author who clearly has a thorough and deep understanding of improving behaviour in schools. Consequently, it is not surprising that Bill Rogers has penned the foreword.

---

### **Pete Hrekow**

Pete Hrekow is an experienced teacher, youth and community worker and trainer who regularly tutors on the NUT's CPD Programme.

The book acknowledges the complexity of improving behaviour in schools and, from the very start, leaves the reader in no doubt that there are no “quick fixes” or magic solutions. Rather, it relies on a concerted and ongoing effort to ensure that schools’ policies and procedures, in relation to pupil behaviour, must be well thought through; owned by the whole school community; and reviewed and amended in the light of the changes which are an inevitable part of school life and the society in which we live.

The author places considerable emphasis on the behaviour of staff in schools and how this can impact on pupil behaviour either negatively or positively. It may come as a shock to many teachers to realise that they often play a major role in behavioural incidents through their emotional and often disrespectful responses to pupils. I continue to be shocked – based on my observations in schools and what I hear from a significant number of teachers – by senior staff in schools, who demean and demonise pupils whose behaviour they find irritating, rude or confrontational. This book will help schools to challenge staff attitudes and behaviour through professional debate.

Chris Lee begins by exploring the underlying values and principles, which underpin a school’s ethos and consequently, the way staff approach inappropriate and challenging behaviour. It does not, however, propose a dogmatic process for developing policy. Rather, it provides a framework, which schools can use or adapt in a “mix and match” way that suits the reality of their needs and stage of development. The importance of investing time and effort in developing policies related to behaviour are stressed; and the author is very pragmatic in pointing out that that even more time can be spent in negative interaction with pupils in the absence of sound policies and procedures.

There is a strong emphasis on using data to inform and further develop schools’ policies on behaviour and this book reiterates the importance of linking pupil behaviour to effective teaching, a constant theme of the Steer report, *Learning Behaviour* (2005).

The author provides a series of staff development exercises, which schools can use either as they are or modify to suit their particular circumstances. These exercises are well thought out and should provide schools with considerable opportunity to explore differing staff perceptions in order to work towards achieving consistency among all staff in how they approach pupil behaviour.

Consistency is widely acknowledged in much of the literature on behaviour in schools as a key theme and this book rightly recognises how crucial this is.

It also reflects the ongoing national debate on behaviour in schools and makes a considerable contribution to that debate. Underlying theories and approaches are usefully summarised and references are made to a wide

range of literature on the subject of behaviour in schools. Decisions about which theories or approaches are appropriate are left to the reader and the needs, aspirations and circumstances of individual schools.

There is a strong emphasis, throughout this book, on promoting positive behaviour and the author stresses the importance of an eclectic approach to addressing inappropriate behaviour and solution focused approaches. This emphasis will bring a breath of fresh air to many school staff who are already committed to finding solutions rather than placing the blame on children and young people, their families or society in general.

The book covers the concepts of rights, rules and rewards and helpfully distinguishes between rules for all and “directions”, which apply to particular curriculum areas or specific activities. Examples of rules are cited and include a rationale for each rule, for example, “walking in class – is safer for everyone”. It includes a thought-provoking analysis of rewards, which will enable schools to seriously debate how they reward pupils, an area which, in my experience, is often approached without deep consideration of the impact of rewards on improving pupil behaviour and learning. This book will help schools to audit and meaningfully debate their reward systems.

There is an illuminating discussion on punishment, sanctions, consequences and restoration and the author poses the question, “which (approach) is most likely to bring genuine change in pupils’ behaviour?”

The book goes on to address the impact of school and classroom routines, classroom organisation and the learning environment on improving pupil behaviour. The author also emphasises the importance of graduated responses to inappropriate behaviour, starting with the least intrusive.

The issue of power bases within schools is illuminating and will provoke considerable debate within schools. The book goes on to discuss assertiveness and conflict and contains a very helpful analysis of positive outcomes as opposed to negative conflict. “Zero tolerance” and “get tough” approaches are also addressed and analysed as being synonymous with getting aggressive as opposed to being assertive. Being assertive has to be the preferred option for staff working in today’s schools. The author reminds the reader that the power dynamics in schools are no longer based on an authoritarian approach but on the knowledge, skills and ideas that inform the professional classroom.

My only reservation about the contents of this book is the lack of emphasis on the responsibilities of governing bodies in making and reviewing statements of general principles, which have been included in successive legislation since 1996. However, in reality, this is often left to the head teacher and staff (and some would argue, rightly so) and

consequently, the author has reflected what is actually happening in many schools.

In conclusion, I was impressed by Lee's emphasis on encouraging schools to enhance staff skills by building on sound evidence-based practice; develop a collegial approach; promote strong professional relationships between staff and pupils; and agree appropriate rewards for pupils.

This excellent book should be essential reading for all those who are involved in improving behaviour in schools: senior leadership teams, lead behaviour professionals, local authority support services and outreach teams. It will prove to be a valuable resource for anyone planning and delivering training in the area of pupil behaviour. It has also, in my view, made a major contribution to the inclusion of pupils, who demonstrate inappropriate or challenging behaviour and that is to be warmly welcomed.

**ASK: HOW TO TEACH LEARNING TO LEARN IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Juliet Strang, Philip Masterson & Oliver Button (Ed. Phil Lucas)  
 Crown House Publishing 2006 £24.99 ISBN: 1845900243

ASK sets out the work undertaken in one school, Villiers High School in Southall, West London, to develop a curriculum based around the concept of 'learning to learn'.

Written by members of the senior management of the school, it outlines a clear rationale for the approach taken, arguing that established approaches to the curriculum which begin with knowledge, and which are based on memory recall of key facts, are less suited to developing independent learners with the necessary skills for lifelong learning than one which has embedded within it the development of positive attitudes to, and skills for learning as a starting point.

The authors acted as 'leaders' of the development that took place in the school and worked with well-known researchers and advocates of the approach such as Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas. They are honest about the importance of the involvement and commitment of the whole school for its success and the extent to which established practices and cultures may be challenged. They acknowledge that the approach requires a shift for many teachers from becoming "traditional professors of a subject" towards becoming a "guide, adviser and instructor of learning". They are honest enough also to recognise that such a commitment translates into workload, but argue that the longer term benefits compensate for such an investment – including, they suggest, in terms of future workload.

A central thesis of the approach is that when pupils are empowered to

**Robert Cheesman**

Robert Cheesman is Professional Assistant (Secondary) in the Education and Equal Opportunities Department, National Union of Teachers

become more involved in and responsible for their own learning through embedding the ASK 'meta-learning' approach, more demands can be made of them over time. The authors believe that ASK encourages more effective and independent learners, rather than passive recipients who need to be continually 'spoon-fed' information. One illustration of this early in the book is a description, surely common among many teachers of the frustrations of realising that Year 11 pupils coming up to GCSEs had not developed sufficient independent learning skills, and associated skills such as time management, effective group work, enquiry skills or research skills, to maximise their potential. It was in acknowledging this fact that the staff at Villiers committed to introducing ASK as an approach, beginning with entry to the school in Year 7.

Although the concept of 'learning to learn' is not new, the book will be of interest to many teachers, and perhaps in particular to school managers, as it is both engaging and accessible. Moreover, it is clear that it is a book based on the real experiences of teachers and school managers within classrooms and across the whole school. This may perhaps make it all the more powerful for many readers as Villiers is an inner-city school in an area of relatively high social deprivation, and is achieving its success as a school numbered among the ranks of what have come to be too easily dismissed and even vilified in recent years as "bog standard" comprehensive community schools.

The authors make a welcome contribution to the debate about learning and teaching, and to raising standards, since their book achieves what is too often lacking to the profession – a chance for one group of practitioners in one school to describe to practitioners in other schools what approaches they have used, the lessons they have learned along the way, what the effect has been, and how it has been achieved.

A strength of the book is that, having been written by practitioners, it suggests practical ideas for learning activities, but recognises that different schools have different contexts and that many will want to adapt or refine those ideas to meet their own circumstances. Similarly, it has a practical format, including advice from experience on how to engage the whole school in ASK techniques, issues for school managers, ideas for INSET, and useful 'Frequently Asked Questions' and suggested further reading sections towards the end.

Another strength of the book is that in describing the experience of developing their curriculum, and the rationale underpinning it, the authors attempt to do so by locating the process within the current education policy climate. For example, they describe the contribution they believe their approach will make both to lifelong learning and to developing personalised learning. Indeed, in discussing personalised learning, they provide a sensible and workable definition of a

contemporary policy idea which is often described by policy-makers more in terms of what it is not rather than what it is.

The authors acknowledge that they are still at an early stage of the process as, at the time of publication, Villiers was in its second year of teaching the ASK based curriculum. So, while they are confident that the approach has been successful in terms of the impact on learning attitudes and outcomes, they are unable to provide a quantification of success as outcomes which translate into school and college performance table standings or OFSTED-produced performance and assessment data outcomes. This may lessen the impact of their success claims among the most cautious or performance-data driven practitioner or policy-maker.

That is a minor point, however. On the evidence of the book, the staff and students at Villiers can be proud of what they have achieved so far, especially since the entire approach is, as the book emphasises, reliant on a whole-school commitment, from the bottom up as well as from the top down. At the same time, there is nothing about the way in which the approach is detailed that suggests that there is anything quite so remarkable about Villiers' successes – as proud as the authors clearly are of their school – which other schools could not aspire to.

As part of an ongoing discussion about the nature of learning, and how it is best supported, the book represents an intelligent and practical contribution which will be of interest to many readers with an interest in education. It is likely to be of greatest benefit to teachers and school leaders who are actively considering new approaches to the school curriculum or are already at the initial stages of developing similar approaches to those adopted at Villiers.



# LITERACY *Today*

*Literacy Today* has a cross-sectoral approach to literacy throughout the English-speaking world. It includes articles on literacy policy, research and practice, as well as information on literacy issues raised in parliament, literacy resources, publications and research briefings.

THE  
EDUCATION PUBLISHING  
COMPANY LIMITED

Education Publishing Company Ltd, Devonia House, 4 Union Terrace,  
CREDITON, DEVON, EX17 3DY. Tel: 01363 774455. Fax: 01363 776592.  
Email: [lt@educationpublishing.com](mailto:lt@educationpublishing.com). Web: [www.educationpublishing.com](http://www.educationpublishing.com)

# Education

*Education* brings you news of what is happening in the world of education.

*Education* reports on the latest developments in education and children's services.

Sent by email first thing every Friday morning.

Free to subscribers of *Education Review*.

To receive your free copy every week,  
send an email to  
[education@educationpublishing.com](mailto:education@educationpublishing.com)

THE  
**EDUCATION PUBLISHING**  
COMPANY LIMITED

Education Publishing Company Ltd, Devonia House, 4 Union Terrace,  
Credon, Devon, EX17 3DY. Tel: 01363 774455. Fax: 01363 776592.  
Email: [er@educationpublishing.com](mailto:er@educationpublishing.com). Web: [www.educationpublishing.com](http://www.educationpublishing.com)

# education review

volume 20 • number 2 • Autumn 2007

## Preface

Steve Sinnott, *General Secretary, NUT* 1

## Identity, diversity and citizenship

Keith Ajegbo, *former head teacher of Deptford Green School, Lewisham* 4

## How society can create the conditions for all children to enjoy a good childhood

Bob Reitemeier, *Chief Executive, The Children's Society* and Zoe Mason, *Campaigns and Media Officer, The Children's Society* 9

## What is the place of race in the debate about choice?

Debbie Weekes-Bernard, *Senior Research and Policy Analyst, Runnymede Trust* 16

## Educational achievement and social class

Bill Greenshields, *Vice President, National Union of Teachers* 22

## "Troublous times": Perceptions, myths and the dangers of demonising young people

Doug Jewell, *Campaigns Co-ordinator, Liberty* 31

## Some issues are too important not to tackle – Raising the achievement of vulnerable children and young people?

Clare Tickell, *Chief Executive, National Children's Homes* 32

## Multiculturalism and the gender trap: Young ethnicised women and domestic violence in schools

Heidi Safia Mirza, *Professor of Equalities Studies, Institute of Education, London University* 40

## Parenting support can help parents to develop better relationships with their children and reduce the risk of behaviour problems

Judy Hutchings, *Research Director, Incredible Years* and Tracey Bywater, *Project Trial Co-ordinator, Incredible Years* 51

## IntoUniversity: Making it happen

Rachel Carr, *Chief Executive, IntoUniversity* 62

## Girls and exclusion: Why are we overlooking the experiences of half the school population?

Audrey Osler, *founding Director, Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights Education, University of Leeds* 71

## "T'ain't what you do (it's the way that you do it)": Challenging the boys to do better

Allison Crompton, *head teacher, Middleton Technology School, Rochdale* 80

## From exclusion to empowerment: LGBT young people find their voice

Jess Wood, *Co-founder and Director, Allsorts* and Marianne Lemon, *Volunteering Development Worker, Allsorts* 88

## Chickenshed – "Theatre that defies theatre" – and education!

Paul Morrall, *Director of Education and Outreach, Chickenshed* 94

Book Reviews 101