

Good Practice In Hackney Primary schools

African Caribbean Boys



A summary of the main findings of a research project carried out in 3 Learning Trust primary schools for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service

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Rationale:

The issue of Black Caribbean male achievement continues to be an issue for many Hackney schools. However we wanted to look at those schools that had 'bucked the trend' and had consistently (2 years or more, & significant numbers) good results for this group. Our data produced 8 schools. Three schools were chosen Harrington Hill, Baden Powell and Holy Trinity.

Researcher Anne –Marie Ingram from University Of Surrey was employed to conduct a qualitative study in all three schools to find out what was the good practice, that has given Black Caribbean boys such good results at key stage two.

FINDINGS:

The common features across all three schools were the following:

1 Leadership

The head, has a particularly important role to play. The head teachers in the schools studied have the capacity to co-create a vision for a school's future, in which all members of the community and in particular Caribbean parents expect success and high standards.

The management team understands the issues around underachievement of African and African-Caribbean heritage pupils, the effective head teacher will make it clear to staff, parents, pupils and governors that this underachievement runs counter to the school's vision for achievement .

The head teacher can set the tone for the nature of the relationships between school staff and Black communities by providing effective models of behaviour. The following represent key areas:

- being confident in approaching and engaging with Black parents in public areas such as school concerts or in the playground
- being readily available to meet and talk with Black parents
- greeting Black parents and pupils with genuine warmth
- ensuring that body language is open and friendly.

In these schools, leadership does not rest with the head teacher alone. SMT members have a key role to play in ensuring that a clear focus is sustained on raising the attainment of Black pupils. Modelling the building of effective relationships with Black pupils and teaching which provides models of how to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive for this group of pupils can be very powerful indeed.

2 Inclusive Curriculum

Differences between African-Caribbean experiences and African experiences need to be highlighted alongside the similarities and the links drawn explicitly. Teachers are not expected to know everything about Africa and the Caribbean. Parents, children and community groups, namely, those who really know, are used as a good source of information and are involved sometimes in curriculum delivery. Resources from Hackney Black community groups are often a useful source for contacts for Black artists, poets and historians.

Alongside in depth studies of aspects of African and African-Caribbean histories, teachers make regular references to the histories and cultures of Africa and the Caribbean.

Schools studied favour In general, active learning approaches tend to result in higher levels of engagement. For example:

- Collaborative group activities
- Role play
- Research projects
- Opportunities for creativity
- Physical tasks (e.g. making an object or cutting, sorting and ordering statements on cards)

3 Behaviour management

African-Caribbean heritage pupils in particular emphasize strongly the need for respect from teachers and other adults in the school. By this they usually mean the types of interaction that adults have with them. For example, not shouting at them, friendly and open body language, no public humiliations or put-downs, high expectations of behaviour and academic achievement thus allowing the self-fulfilling prophecy to be a positive rather than a negative one, avoiding stereotypes and the ability to listen to their concerns.

The schools in the study have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, model these and demonstrate respect for pupils and parents. The messages are widely understood throughout the community.

4 Parental Involvement

Involving both parents seems to be the way in which the schools try to work. Parent interviews suggest that they establish trust and co-operation. But

importantly, an ethos in which parent's concerns are taken seriously helps to build the confidence of the parents that they are regarded as 'partners in struggle' as one parent put it, and to take a more active part in their children's education. An 'Open door' policy needs to be one where parents are genuinely supported.

Parents and pupils know what the school's expectations of them are and to be given the opportunity to express their own concerns and expectations about the school.

5 Early Investment – best teachers working with early years, KS1 and Y3 and 4

Schools make active decisions about where to deploy staff according to their skills and experience including used of EMAG funded resources. These match the needs of Caribbean boys but a common perspective is for early investment to ensure attainment at KS1 is 2b or above and to support the transition to the KS2 curriculum where the drop off for Caribbean boys begins to accelerate.

6 Enrichment

The schools all have substantially enhancements to their curriculum offer including lunchtime and after school clubs, sporting clubs, individual instrument tuition and other activities.

7 Role Models

- Black parents often feel reassured by the presence of Black staff. Relationships can be built from a point of a shared understanding of a range of basic issues and within a framework of shared cultural understanding.
- Black pupils often feel more relaxed discussing a difficult issue with a member of staff from their own background.
- Black teachers can use their knowledge, understanding and personal experiences to address key issues around race, identity and learning in schools i.e. bring a Black perspective to bear on a range of issues.

In the schools studied, Black school staff are not only employed in non-teaching posts in the school or in basic scale teaching posts but are also at all levels of school organisation.