

Reviews of Complementing Teachers: A practical guide to promoting race equality in schools

Primary

Paul Thomas, a teacher at Rockmount Primary School in Upper Norwood, reviews *Complementing Teachers: A Practical Guide to Promoting Race Equality in Schools*

This book offers practical guidance from a working group of teachers and other educationists brought together by the Runnymede Trust.

The book is split into three sections. Section A gives schools valuable support in developing effective ways of evaluating and monitoring inclusive practice strategies currently in place. Section B provides lesson plans for each subject, with lots of cross-curricular links. The lessons are easily adapted between key stages.

Section C gives guidance on creating an atmosphere of inclusion for different groups in the school community. It also gives valuable historical background to race and education, which is a thought-provoking read. This section is followed by a useful list of references and resources.

An easy-to-use CD-rom comes with the book. Lessons can be downloaded from it and used by staff across the school, so there is no need to purchase multiple copies.

This book is a valuable resource for every school. The thinking and ideas within the book need to be developed across a whole school to be effective. It certainly provoked a lot of discussion within the staffroom and has made me challenge my own feelings and thoughts on an area which many people, not just within education, find very difficult.

~~~

Saroj Bell, Assistant Head-teacher at William Shrewsbury Primary School, Stretton, reviews *Complementing Teachers: A Practical Guide to Promoting Race Equality in Schools*

My interest in promoting Race Equality in schools comes from having two mixed-race children and also from a strong belief that all children need to be taught about different ethnic groups in a natural and continuous way rather than via random lessons under the title of 'Multicultural Education'. In my 17 years of teaching, I know that children of all ages like the challenge of learning new things, provided that they are presented in an enthusiastic, creative and exciting way. Young children **are** our best tools for creating a tolerant and truly multicultural society. Teachers owe it to our country to facilitate this in order to improve racial understanding and thereby create a safe and happy place for **everyone** who lives here.

*Complementing Teachers* provides schools with advice on policy documentation as well as practical ways in which to organise and manage school in order to provide equal opportunities for all children. However, the book is not aimed entirely at Senior Managers and Governors, as the bulk of actual teaching happens in the classroom where **teachers** have the biggest **impact**. Teachers are the most important resource schools have. Teachers themselves must acknowledge this and work with confidence and pride to use their skills to help create a racially aware and understanding society.

As a Year 2 teacher, I have used the book within my school and to teach a lesson on Hindu temples in a friend's school in Derbyshire. The Key Stage 1 RE curriculum requires children to learn about places of worship. The lesson plan on page 124 addresses this learning objective and, after reading it, I rang up a temple in Wolverhampton to seek permission to video and photograph the building and useful artefacts within it. The Brahmin was very supportive and eager to share his knowledge so that children in less ethnically diverse schools are introduced to other faiths in our country. Even now, I hear the voices of those who say: 'we don't need it in our school because we don't have Black/Asian children here!' These are the very schools that do need it because they have fewer opportunities to learn and understand other faiths.

With my photographs, video and artefacts assembled, I delivered a lesson on Hindu temples to both Year 2 classes at Woodville Infant School, who were in the middle of an OFSTED inspection. The lesson included an introduction to some of my artefacts, a song and the 8-minute videotape of the temple building. This was followed by an 'Indian style' prayer, listening to Arti (part of a religious ceremony) music and lighting a diwa (candle) and incense sticks. We then shared the blessed food (parsad). The OFSTED inspector could not think of any way in which the lesson could have been improved as it had held a difficult class spellbound. The children were eager to learn and to share their previous knowledge through questions and answers.

In my own school, I share with the Year 3 classes my experiences of travel to India. They study Chembakolli, a village in Southern India as part of their geography curriculum, so it is particularly important that they discover India to be much more diverse than just that one example. I take along photographs, visual aids and a home video to show them other parts of India.

The maths lesson plan on page 86 can be further extended for PSHE by tasting and enjoying fruits from other countries, which can then lead on straightforwardly to artefacts from other countries – clothes, for example. It is important not to teach anything in isolation, as children understand best when they can link one area to another.

Motivated children bring lots of enthusiasm to the classroom, and we as teachers **must** use this to enhance their learning and help to **create a coherent multi-racial society**.

~~~

Secondary

Keith Gregson, Head of History at Brierton School in Hartlepool, reviews *Complementing Teachers: A Practical Guide to Promoting Race Equality in Schools*

This book is a manageable and handy guide to approaching the important topic of racial equality in education. It is divided into three parts: the development of policy across the key stages via leadership and teaching and learning strategies; suggestions for material for curriculum subjects; and support information that includes a potted history of race and education and suggestions for further reading. The book is accompanied by a CD-ROM.

Classroom practitioners will be pleased to see that half the book - which is spiral-bound for ease of use - is dedicated to suggestions for actual lessons. In history, eight lesson plans are provided - a couple of which I found particularly appealing. Pupils at KS2 are asked, for example, to discuss how free people really were in ancient Athens. This allows them to consider the nature of freedom at an early age. While such lessons are useful, however, dealing fully with 14 subjects at all key stages leaves the material spread a bit thinly.

This book is an approachable hands-on guide to the subject of racial equality. Its weakness, perhaps, lies in the detail - or, rather, the lack of it. Perhaps to compensate for this, an extensive list of contacts has been provided at the back of the book, enabling teachers to search for further helpful material elsewhere.