

# HILLSHOTT INFANT SCHOOL AND NURSERY

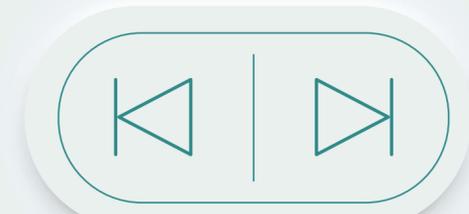
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### September 2023

Hillshott Infant and Nursery School is in Letchworth, North Hertfordshire. It is a two-form-entry school, with a 52-place nursery. Pupils come from a range of more than 15 ethnic backgrounds, with the majority of children being White British (79%). Currently, 24% of pupils from Nursery to Year 2 are known to be in receipt of pupil premium funding. Approximately 18% of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), including 2.8% who have an education, health and care plan (EHCP), and 15% currently require SEN support. Of 39 staff members, six are not White British, with five of these being appointed in the last six years. The governing body has nine members, of which seven are White British.

We began our journey towards greater race equity and representation last academic year. There was no particular trigger for this other than an awareness that it was an area we could develop further. We began with a linked performance management target for many staff, including the headteacher, to ensure that race equity was seen as a priority. We developed an action plan for equality and diversity, with targets and actions for each term focusing around staff training, curriculum resources and stakeholders. These included:

- to provide CPD for staff on equality and diversity
- to complete an audit of the curriculum to fully embed racial diversity and representation
- to consider strategies to increase the number of staff from Black, Asian and ethnically minoritised groups

Our HCC Commissioned School Visit in December 2022 was on race equality, and Toks Olusamokun, HFL Education race equity adviser, worked with us to identify strengths and areas to develop, including further developing our curriculum and resources. One INSET day in January was dedicated to subject leaders exploring their subject under a *race lens*. This included looking at the curriculum maps to see where content could be made more inclusive and representative of the community, e.g. texts used in English lessons, historical figures studied, artists focused on in art and music. Following this, we had a whole-school display of “Inspirational People”, where each class chose a person to research and represent, e.g. Marcus Rashford, Frida Kahlo, Mae Jemison.

Teachers have attended eight INSET sessions and staff meetings on anti-racism in education with Esher Williams from OK To Be. This work has included looking at the foundations of racism, the importance of racial identity, tackling racism in the classroom, and advocating for those in your care. The training was thought-provoking and challenging, and the discussions – both during the training and between sessions – were very valuable. Working with an external partner with expertise in anti-racism was useful, and staff felt more confident following the training in tackling racism and being anti-racist.

In addition to the in-school training, leaders attended HFL Education’s Building an anti-racist school CPD and their National Race Equity Conference, and this training was cascaded to all members of staff.

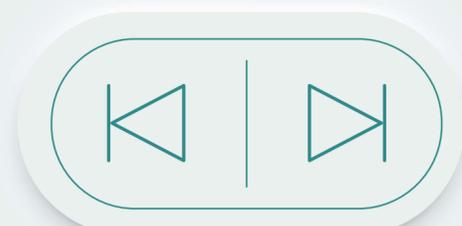
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We have worked hard to raise the profile of equality, diversity and inclusivity with families and have included information in the weekly school newsletter and questions on our school questionnaire, for example:

- The school celebrates diverse cultures, people and experiences in its teaching. (Yes – 96.9%)
- The school has an inclusive environment that enables all children to thrive. (Yes – 100%)

We have purchased a range of books exploring anti-racism for our staff library. Any articles of interest are circulated via email for staff to read. Governors have been kept up to date on our journey during curriculum meetings and governing body meetings. We are committed to developing race equity and representation at Hillshott. Being part of the Great Representation cohort will consolidate our work from the last year and help us to continue to develop it further.

### October 2023

Day 1 of the Great Representation programme saw us arranged into hub groups. Each school gave a brief presentation about their context and spoke about where they were on their journey towards race equality and equity. The four schools in our hub are very different in location and context. They include a secondary school, a Catholic primary school, a Church of England primary school, and our own school.

Listening to the speakers, we learned about systemic race inequity in the UK and looked at national data compared with Hertfordshire data. Some of the statistics were shocking and emphasised our essential role as educators in supporting all children to achieve their potential; and the importance of all children feeling represented in the school workforce, in books and in the curriculum we provide for them. This message was further supported during Paul Miller's keynote speech, where we heard about case studies of school leaders leading curriculum inclusion, anti-racism and tackling race inequality. Finally, Cynthia Rowe, a Hertfordshire headteacher, talked us through her Great Representation journey and was very inspirational.

On 26 September we had a visit from local author Gemma Keir, who has written an inclusive book series, called *The Abilities in Me*. These books celebrate what children with disabilities *can* do, rather than what they cannot do. The purpose of the visit was to raise awareness of different abilities and promote kindness and understanding amongst children from a range of diverse backgrounds. Gemma's books are based on real children with SEN and include characters from Black, Brown and mixed-heritage families.

As we entered October, our English lead audited the books we have in our library that reference people from a range of diverse backgrounds. These books have been fully integrated and spread throughout the library, rather than segregated into their own section, in order to promote inclusivity. The resulting list of books and authors ensures that staff are still able to find specific books if required.

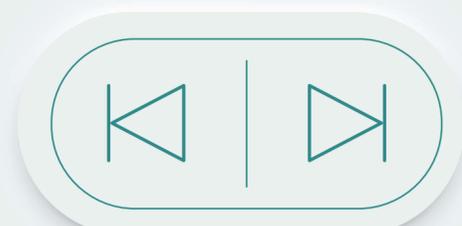
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To link in with Black History Month, class teachers ensured that some of their planning, books and teaching resources incorporated a range of skin colours and cultural heritages. For example, in Year 1 the children used a book called *My Two Grannies* by Dame Floella Benjamin to support their activities in English. This encouraged discussions with children about race at an age-appropriate level.

Our first hub visit, to Pope Paul Primary School on 17 October, provided us with a good opportunity to discuss initial steps and changes we had all put into place. The school had begun lots of work on diversity and inclusion, and we were lucky to visit during their One World Week. We had a tour of the school, and leaders pointed out recent displays that celebrated children's heritages. Each year group were studying a country, and the children were able to talk to us with enthusiasm and confidence about their learning. We were inspired to consider our own focus week in the summer term and to renew our displays in school.

Andrew Moffat visited Hillshott on 18 October to share his teaching of "No Outsiders". He taught all classes from Nursery to Year 2 and led the staff meeting at the end of the day. This complemented our work on race equality, and the children were able to discuss differences and similarities in appearances, families and abilities. The message was clear that we all belong at Hillshott – everyone is welcome. We can accept differences and respect one another, even if we have different views.

### November 2023

Performance management appraisals were completed for all members of staff by the beginning of November. Continuing from the previous year's practice, we ensured that the targets included a focus on diversity. Examples include:

- to further develop work on diversity and equity in school
- to strengthen and refine the school's curriculum, ensuring it is purposeful, engaging and tailored to the children at Hillshott

Subject leaders continue to revisit the long-term and medium-term plans to ensure the curriculum is relevant to our children and that the resources in school reflect this. Our art subject leader sent a link to all staff members to access a Padlet – a digital platform that allows teachers to access pictures, videos, timelines, files and other information about a range of diverse artists in one central location – featuring many of the artists in our long-term planning.

Following on from our whole-school training with Andrew Moffat in October, we began weekly "No Outsiders" class assemblies. Each focuses on a photograph, which each class discusses together. In our celebration assembly on Fridays, we revisit the photograph as a whole school. Each photo lends itself to the theme that, although we may have differences in appearance, families and opinions, this does not mean that we cannot respect each other. We do not have to be the same to be friends, which fits well with our Great Representation work.

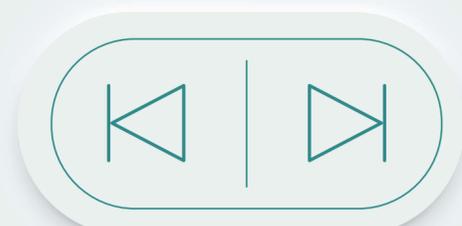
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On 3 November we attended the second seminar for the Great Representation programme. We listened to three very inspiring speakers, who all left us with things to think about. Claire Stewart-Hall talked about institutional racism, Sufian Sadiq discussed racial equity and shared some of his personal experiences, whilst Shammi Rahman talked about why being silent did not give her protection. We reflected on how we as children learnt about racism and considered the importance of topical issues and how this may affect people's views on racism.

After this seminar, we were inspired to undertake some pupil voice on *belonging* in our school. On 10 November we spoke to 14 children to discuss where they felt they belonged, both inside and outside of school. The discussion was very positive, and the children were able to talk about belonging to their families, to their class and to Hillshott. The children felt they did not belong to countries they had never visited before. They were able to talk about how to make new pupils feel welcome at our school and were clear that everyone belonged, even if they looked different.

Following on from our increased work on diversity in school, we decided to include some targeted questions in our staff questionnaire, which was sent out in November:

- Do you feel confident talking about race and skin colour with children? If not, what would help you?
- How can we promote and celebrate different cultures and heritage within our school community?

Of the 21 responses, 20 staff members felt confident talking about race and skin colour with children. The one staff member who lacked confidence did not identify ways we could further support. In our feedback, we will remind staff how to access further support. We received some excellent ideas for celebrating different cultures and heritage, which we will look to implement. This includes a cultural week, with children learning about a variety of different cultures, having the opportunities to cook and taste food, having family members invited into school to share their heritage and culture, and facilitating the creation of a cookery book with favourite family recipes.

### December 2023

At the end of November we visited Nobel School, a large secondary school in Stevenage. We were interested to find out how older students are supported and how diversity is encouraged as they enter their final years of schooling. We could then compare this with the early years that we experience at Hillshott. After attending a staff CPD session on questioning, we had a tour around the school. We spoke with a number of staff members and pupils from a range of different backgrounds and watched some lessons taking place. The shared environment (corridors, etc) highlighted the importance of having aspirations, with numerous posters and photographs displayed around the school celebrating where students had moved on to for further study and what past students were doing now. They included people from a variety of backgrounds and cultural heritages. We also saw photographs of current students receiving awards for their accomplishments at school. Speaking to a group of students made it clear that these displays help to foster aspirations in them and the belief that they can do anything they want to if they work hard.

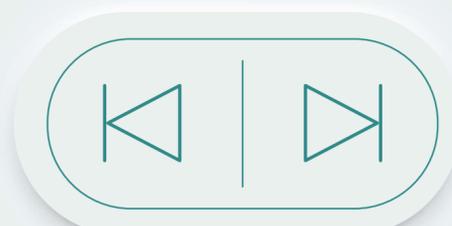
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The students we spoke to were proud to be Nobelians, and there was a clear sense of belonging. Whilst some of them expressed that they had experienced racism at school, they felt that it was dealt with fairly. The students also have an opportunity to contribute to displays and to lead events. The student council, led by a head boy and a head girl, have previously run a cultural food festival. This encouraged pupils to try food from a range of cuisines from around the world. This is something they really enjoyed and felt valued in leading. Another student spoke of a Polish club she had joined, which enabled her to feel welcome and make friends with other children from a similar background.

As part of our wider reading, we have purchased a number of books. One example is *I Heard What You Said* by Jeffrey Boakye – an honest and often funny account of the author’s teaching career as a secondary school English teacher. He tackles the subject of racism with a clear vision of how we can challenge stereotypes, assumptions and the outdated curriculum: “We need to equip children with a language and a context with which to understand racism and enter meaningfully into the debate. Not being racist is not good enough. It’s time to become anti-racist.”

Day 3 of the Great Representation programme focused on the *How*, following on from the *Why* of Days 1 and 2. It was very interesting to focus on diversity in the curriculum. Bennie Kara encouraged us to think in a meaningful way beyond token gestures and move towards including diverse content. She encouraged us to move from performative allyship to proactive allyship. Following this input, we constructed a list of questions for subject leaders to consider at their next curriculum review in January:

- Is the curriculum logical?
- Is it compliant?
- Is it reflective of the local community?
- Where is the teaching of protected characteristics?
- Is it embedded and usualised?

Although we have already worked hard on our curriculum, consideration of these questions will help to develop it further.

Headteacher Seb Gray from New Bradwell Primary School shared the inspiring story of the journey of his previous school – Laurence Haines – towards greater diversity. He urged us to motivate, encourage, inspire and be inspired. Laurie O’Brien, headteacher of Chater Junior School, outlined the importance of courage and bravery and considering the ongoing commitment to equity and diversity, rather than seeing it as a quick fix.

One of our teachers undertaking further study shared two blogs with the rest of the staff, the content of which focused on diversity and inclusion. The first one is featured on [diverseeducators.co.uk](https://diverseeducators.co.uk). It is entitled “How to Talk with Children and Young People about Race and Racism” and written by Sarah Soyei from EqualTeach (2020). The second one is featured on [nesta.org.uk](https://nesta.org.uk) and entitled “Why we need an anti-racist approach in early years education”, by Liz Pemberton (2022). Both articles were an interesting read and aligned with Great Representation by encouraging people to get talking from an early age rather than ignoring questions from children about race, and to challenge stereotypes.

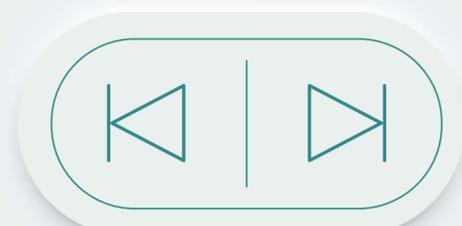
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## January 2024

Following on from the Day 3 input, we had some time during the INSET day in January to revisit our curriculum. Subject leaders reviewed their existing curriculum, considering the questions outlined in our December entry. Updated subject policies included a section on “Diversity in the curriculum”.

The children in our school took part in a local writing project based on the book *Here We Are* by Oliver Jeffers. The story celebrates all living things on our planet and provides a great opportunity for discussions to be had around diversity and belonging. By the end of the project, our pupils had generated some lovely poems and display boards inspired by the book. Quotes from some of the children’s poems include: “We love our planet earth” and “Animals are fabulous. Some are furry, some are slimy, some can run and others can walk”.

We have also started to introduce world music for children to listen to as they walk into singing assembly. The music covers a range a different cultures and music styles, such as reggae, blues and gospel. At the beginning of each assembly, children are taught about the style of music, who performed it, and where it originates from. This enables children’s listening repertoire to be broadened and other cultures from around the world to be celebrated.

On 15 January our next hub visit took us to Leverstock Green Church of England Primary School on the outskirts of Hemel Hempstead. We were given a tour of the school by pupils, who were very proud to belong to the school. They spoke enthusiastically about their teachers and learning and were keen to show us every part of the school, both inside and out. Classroom displays were full of pictures of the children and their families, and the pupils we spoke to have a strong sense of belonging.

The HFL Education National Disadvantaged Conference took place on 17 January. This is always an inspirational day, and this year was no different. We heard from Lemn Sissay, a poet of Ethiopian and Greek heritage, who grew up in the care system in the North of England. His memoir, *My Name is Why*, is interspersed with social workers’ reports, letters, school reports and other documentation, which it took him 30 years to gain access to. He writes about the racism he faced as a child, including his nickname “Chalky-White”; and his foster mother dragging a fine-toothed metal comb through his afro hair, which she said only hurt him because he had “hair sore”.

On 22 January we attended the fourth seminar of the Great Representation programme. Professor David Gillborn was our first speaker. He presented statistics, which showed that in schools the pupil population nationally is more diverse than the general population, whereas the ethnicity of teachers is less diverse than that of the general population. Inequality remains significant and persistent, and racism can be complex, subtle and extensive. We were encouraged to critique our own behaviours, considering what we can do in our own schools and beyond to address race inequity.

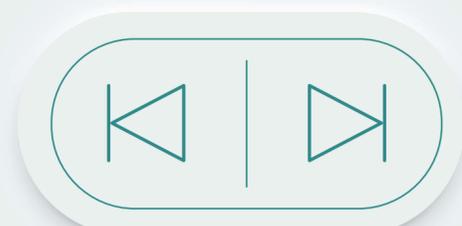
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Toks Olusamokun led a valuable session on “Dealing with Racist Incidents in School”. We had time to discuss different scenarios and consider what we would do in each situation if it occurred in our own schools. This session highlighted the need for us to revisit our policies to ensure that they are clear and robust. Finally, Geeta Patel, the headteacher of Mount Grace School in Potters Bar, spoke to us about her perspective as an ethnic minority pupil, student and headteacher, and also as a parent. She spoke passionately about belonging. We were left with the question, *Do children feel they belong in our school?* If they do, they will be able to achieve well, often exceeding expectations of them.

### February 2024

During our hub visits we had noticed lots of displays focusing on inclusion and diversity. This is something we have developed at Hillshott over the last year. We also wanted to focus on our curriculum and help children to make links with their learning. Our latest display boards include “Find yourself in a book”, where children are signposted to books within our library that include a variety of protagonists. Our “Learning around the world” display shows how our curriculum includes learning from all around the globe, including the Arctic, Australia and Africa. We have a display focusing on the poet Benjamin Zephaniah, with the children’s own poems showcased alongside his.

We are always looking to expand our range of books and resources featuring people from different backgrounds. We therefore purchased additional books, for the school classrooms, that incorporate stories and characters that link to some of our pupils’ heritage, e.g. *My Brown Skin* by Thomishia Booker.

We have been working hard to involve parents in various ways in their children’s education. We have a strong parent teacher association (PTA), the “Friends of Hillshott”, who work hard to raise money for the school. PTA members are diverse and reflect the different ethnicities of children. We would like to encourage parents of underrepresented groups to take on key roles within the PTA. Families come into school for Welcome Wednesdays and Family Fridays in the EYFS. During this time they play alongside their children, and school staff are available to support and talk about developing learning through play.

Spring term also sees our cycle of class assemblies begin. Families are invited to watch their child’s class assembly, with a focus on recent learning across the curriculum. All children are involved in the assembly and are able to showcase their work. One class had introduced a daily positive affirmation to develop the children’s self-esteem and shared these with us: *I am brave, I am strong, I am kind.*

On 29 February we attended the fifth seminar of the Great Representation programme. Our first speaker was Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga from UCL’s Centre of Holocaust Education. She spoke to us about addressing antisemitism. This gave us a real insight into the ongoing racism experienced by Jewish people, which has intensified since the war in Gaza. It was horrifying to see how children attending Jewish schools within Hertfordshire are facing abuse and violence on a daily basis. This reminded us of the importance of educating all children about anti-racism. We need to ensure discussions about bias and prejudice take place from the very beginning of education.

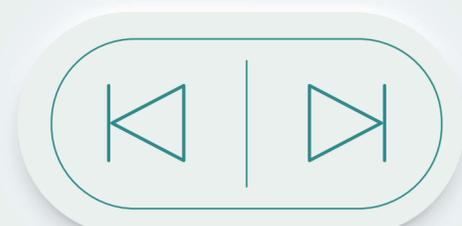
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Next we heard from Penny Rabiger about creating an anti-racist school. She presented lots of information from her research and challenged us with the question *What will you do next?* Her message about the need to be consistent is important. Educating children about diversity and equity is ongoing and needs to be regular, and both planned into the curriculum *and* when an opportunity presents.

One of the most interesting elements of the Great Representation programme has been learning from local schools about their own journeys. We heard, for example, from Margaret Wix Primary School all about *The Wix Way*. Margaret Wix took part in the second cohort of the programme and had seen a great impact. The staff and children spoke enthusiastically about the changes they had made within the curriculum to develop cultural capital, enrichment and pupil leadership. It was clear that the school was a very special, inclusive place, and that the pupils were very proud of it. Rebecca Woode, headteacher of Woodlands Primary, spoke to us about the positive progress she has seen since her own school days. She encouraged us to stand up for what we believe in, and to check in with others and talk, even though some conversations may be difficult.

Another book we have available in our staff library is *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge. This book explores Black history in the UK, with links between class and race, and the idea of Blackness and criminality being inherently interlinked. Reni argues against the concept of colour-blindness, stating that "Seeing race is essential to changing the system." This book was challenging to read at times but underlines the importance and urgency of the anti-racist movement.

One of our members of staff came across an article as part of her personal research, entitled "How to have open and honest conversations with children about racism" by Jaspreet Kaur. This article helped to consolidate our prior training, and it was shared with all staff as a useful resource.

### March 2024

Our final hub visit took place at the end of March. We were pleased to welcome representatives from two schools to Hillshott. We observed two "No Outsiders" class assemblies, in Reception and Year 2. Pupils were discussing a picture of a young girl with glasses and the main character from the Disney film *Encanto*. This showed their understanding of difference and inclusivity. Our visitors were able to see how the children's emotional literacy has developed over time. Our diverse displays and resources were highlighted during the school tour. Following this, two of our senior leaders shared some curriculum changes we have made since embarking on our journey.

We have begun to develop an anti-racism policy, which will include a flowchart of how we respond to racist incidents. When incidents have occurred previously, they have always been dealt with fairly and thoroughly, with parents being informed of the process. The flowchart will remind staff of steps to take and will reassure parents that we do not tolerate racism. The policy will be available on our website when it is completed. This will also be added to our induction for all staff.

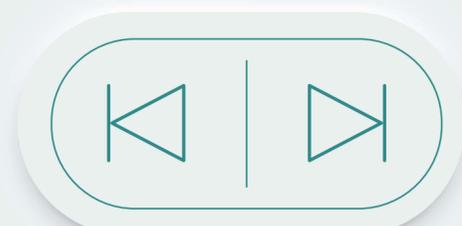
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We review our school website regularly to ensure that we meet all statutory requirements. In Seminar 1, Dr Michael Catchpool talked about exploring school websites as a potential member of staff. With this in mind, we intend to update the gallery of photographs on our website to reflect even further the diversity of our staff and pupils.

Questions we were asked to consider to share with all schools in the final seminar were:

- What are you most proud of since embarking on the Great Representation programme?
- What impact have you seen?

We feel that the curriculum and resources used in our school are now more diverse, and we continue to develop this. Staff have been enthusiastic about our journey and have been willing and open to try new ideas.

Children have responded positively to the wide range of resources and books that have been introduced. One example of this was observed during a learning walk. The Nursery class were reading a version of *Rapunzel* by Chloe Perkins, where all of the characters depicted in the pictures had Brown skin. All children in the class were engaged in the story. One pupil (with Brown skin) was observed stroking her own hair and later asked to take the book home. This request shows the impact that small changes can have on our pupils' sense of belonging.

We believe that our role as early educators is vitally important. We are in a privileged position to be able to educate and guide children towards a greater understanding of race equity.

*Melissa Peacock and Claire Bunyan*

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