

## Refugees into Teaching Policy Briefing

### Equality and diversity

#### Overview

Promoting good race relations is a key duty for schools. The effect of this duty extends to admissions, recruitment, the curriculum and engagement in the wider community. This section provides an overview of the race equality and subsequent related duties for schools before outlining the role refugee teachers and support staff can play in helping schools fulfil these statutory duties.

#### Race Equality

The Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000) (RRA) places a statutory general duty on public authorities to promote race equality. Under the duty, authorities must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, and
- promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups<sup>1</sup>

Asylum seekers and refugees, although not classified as a distinct group under the RRA, should fall under the duty to promote race equality.<sup>2</sup> Schools are required to prepare a written race equality policy.<sup>3</sup> The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) recognises the need to include refugee and asylum seekers in such policies.<sup>4</sup> The DfES has drawn up guidance to help schools fulfil their obligations under the RRA which includes developing a diverse workforce and community inclusion.<sup>5</sup>

#### Community Cohesion

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on schools in England to promote the well-being of pupils and community cohesion. The Department for Communities and Local Government outlines what is meant by cohesive communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Race Relations Act 1976 s 71 (a)(b)

<sup>2</sup> The Audit Commission (2004) *The Journey to Race Equality* p.2

<sup>3</sup> Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001 s3

<sup>4</sup> See *Framework for a Race Equality Policy* at [http://www.cre.gov.uk/downloads/rep\\_schools.pdf](http://www.cre.gov.uk/downloads/rep_schools.pdf), last searched 3 May 2007

<sup>5</sup> See *Schools' Race Equality Policies - From Issues to Outcome*, [http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/Issues\\_to\\_Outcomes\\_Dec04.pdf](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/Issues_to_Outcomes_Dec04.pdf), last searched 3 May 2007

These are that

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods<sup>6</sup>

## **An Inclusive Curriculum**

Developing an inclusive curriculum is a statutory requirement of the national curriculum. The inclusion statement allows for the National Curriculum programmes of study to be modified in order to fulfil this duty. The aim is to provide equality of opportunity for all pupils, including those from

- different social and cultural backgrounds
- different ethnic groups
- diverse linguistic backgrounds<sup>7</sup>

The inclusion statement sets out three principles for meeting this aim, two of which make reference to refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>8</sup>

## **The contribution of refugee teachers**

The DfES<sup>9</sup>, Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and the General Teaching Council (GTC) all recognise the importance of a diverse workforce.<sup>10</sup> Refugee teachers are a valuable resource for schools to fulfil their statutory duties outlined above and help raise pupil attainment. Refugee teachers can

- bring diverse teaching inputs and skills
- relate directly to the experience of refugee and asylum seeking pupils at a critical time of transition and adjustment
- speak two or more languages in addition to English<sup>11</sup>
- act as role models both to asylum seeker, refugee and other ethnic minority pupils

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503278>, last searched 3 May 2007

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.qca.org.uk/8558.html>, last searched 3 May 2007

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.nc.uk.net/inclusion.html>, last searched 3 May 2007

<sup>9</sup> See [http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/Issues\\_to\\_Outcomes\\_Dec04.pdf](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/Issues_to_Outcomes_Dec04.pdf), p.8, last searched 3 May 2007

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.tda.gov.uk/about/newsletter/jan2007/recruitmentandretention.aspx> and <http://www.gtce.org.uk/shared/contentlibs/93802/89822/93353.pdf>, last searched 3 May 2007

<sup>11</sup> For example, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) found that 51% of asylum seekers surveyed spoke two or more languages other than English. See [http://www.asset-uk.org.uk/public/niace\\_as.pdf](http://www.asset-uk.org.uk/public/niace_as.pdf), last searched 3 May 2007

# Refugees *into* Teaching

- assist in developing an inclusive curriculum and better informed race equality policies across the school environment
- be bridges between schools and local communities, providing valuable access and knowledge in promoting community cohesion<sup>12</sup>
- along with OTT more generally, refugee teachers bring their personal life experience from in and outside of the UK to enrich the learning environment and experience of pupils

We recommend that the DfES and related agencies (including Ofsted) make clear reference to refugee and asylum seeker pupils, parents and staff in their race equality and community cohesion guidelines. Schools should have to include refugee and asylum seeker pupils in their Race Equality Scheme (RES) as distinct ethnic minority groups. In addition, Head teachers and Governors should have an established policy on recruiting refugees and asylum seekers as paid staff or volunteers.<sup>13</sup>



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<sup>12</sup> The Government policy of dispersing a majority of asylum seekers around the country has established refugee communities in many places outside of London and the South East.

<sup>13</sup> See RiT guidelines on managing CRB checks.