



مدرسة جيمس متروبول
GEMS Metropole School
MOTOR CITY

Creating a Culture of Belonging for all.

This report offers an overview of our first-year DEI journey, outlining the school's trajectory of how we plan to build a culture of belonging for all. It examines reflections from, students, staff and parents, providing insights into the challenges faced, lessons learned, measures implemented, intended changes, and their impact on our community. Highlighting our community's voice, it presents actionable next steps to further promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring all individuals feel valued, respected, and connected within the GEMS Metropole School Community.

1st July 2024

Yassar Hussain

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Literature review	4
DEEI Journey 2023/24.....	8
Principal’s Message.....	9
Policies.....	10
Our Team.....	12
Community Voice.....	16
DEI Survey Insights and Results.....	21
Curriculum Audit.....	27
Emiratisation Agenda.....	34
Success Stories.....	37
Projected DEEI Road Map 2024/25.....	39
Moving Forward.....	40
Conclusion.....	42
Ethical considerations.....	43
Glossary.....	44
References.....	46

Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of our DEI impact report 2024

In recent years, numerous studies have highlighted the critical importance of having a clear and purposeful DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) agenda, moving beyond mere tick-box exercises to genuine, impactful initiatives. Think tanks like Future Agenda and organisations worldwide are increasingly recognising and discussing DEI, acknowledging its essential role in creating inclusive environments for all.

As we navigate a rapidly evolving society, especially within the UAE's multicultural landscape, it is imperative for schools to commit to DEI principles. Our diverse community, comprising of numerous cultures and nationalities, presents a unique opportunity to educate students, staff, parents and the community in a manner that embraces diversity, promotes equity and inclusion. At GEMS Metropole School, we provide all stakeholders with the skills, experiences, and exposure necessary to understand and appreciate different perspectives.

We strive to create an educational environment where every individual who enters our school feels valued, respected, and has a sense of belonging. Our goal is to ensure that students not only enhance their school experience but also acquire and develop the essential life skills needed to thrive in today's global society. Our DEI journey is crucial to preparing our all stakeholders at GEMS Metropole School to accept, respect, and collaborate with people from all walks of life, equipping them to be future-ready.

**"Diversity: the art of thinking
independently together."**

“

Malcolm Forbes

Literature review

What is Culture and Belonging?

GEMS Metropole School is a vibrant and culturally diverse community, home to over 105 nationalities. Students, staff, and parents from across the globe contribute their unique cultures and identities, enriching the school environment. Despite numerous attempts by scholars to define culture, ongoing discussions persist due to the abstract nature of the concept, as highlighted by (Schein, 2004).

A further definition of organisational culture is given by Schein who describes culture as having three levels:

1. *Artefacts and Behaviour*: these include visible structures (e.g. buildings, rooms, décor, layout, furniture)
2. *Espoused Values*: this is what the organisation says they believe in, how they represent themselves publicly and in official statements.
3. *Basic Underlying Assumptions*: these are the 'real' values; they represent the core beliefs of the organisation. They are the unwritten, unspoken, taken-for-granted assumptions and rules by which the organisation is run. (Schein, 2010)

Peterson and Deal (2002) refer to culture as a community with common values and morals that are presented by the individuals and their identities within the organisation's actions, to create and demonstrate appropriate behaviours.

While culture and identity may appear similar at first glance, they are distinct concepts. The primary disparity lies in the fact that "while culture pertains to our distinct practices, beliefs, and meanings; identity pertains to our sense of belonging to a collective" (Grimson, 2010, p.63).

However, the predominant aspect frequently cited by scholars is values, as they have the potential to inspire and incentivise individuals or groups, consequently influencing the decision-making process (Hodgkinson, 1978, as cited in Bagley, 2013, p.88).

The school has made significant efforts to align its British values with Islamic values. This has been achieved through comprehensive school-wide INSETS, increasing staff awareness of the importance of this alignment, and emphasising the need to respect the cultural norms of teaching within the UAE. Additionally, through collaboration between the Arabic department and the MSC curriculum, more assemblies and lessons have been mapped out to ensure students become familiar not only with UAE culture but also with world cultures. This initiative aims to make students, staff, and parents aware of and committed to these shared values.

When contemplating a move to teach abroad in the Middle East, teachers should remember that although the UAE is known as a tourist hub with amenities similar to those in the UK, such as clubs, bars, and brunches, teaching in the UAE is still very different from teaching in England due to the guidelines that need to be followed that have been set by the Ministry of Education and KHDA. Induction plans for new teachers who are joining the school have already been put into place for them to attend the Centre for Cultural Understanding for colleagues to have a deeper understanding of life in the UAE. The Arabic department want to ensure all new teachers have an effective transition into UAE life and culture.

Cultural and legal differences in all schools vary and not just in international contexts. This can depend on many things. For example, a city school in Yorkshire may have a different ethos and culture to a rural school in Lancashire this might depend on the size of a school, the pupils that attend the school and the community makeup of the surrounding areas. Similarly, a British school in Motor City Dubai may have different values to a British school in Sharjah. According to Hofstede (1991):

‘Culture, when used in a broader sense, refers to the “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. (Hofstede, 1991, p. 5).

While Hofstede (1991) focuses on culture distinguishing people from one another, Corbett (1999) holds the view that culture in a context might not always include everyone and that individuals must choose to either fit into that culture:

‘It is surely rare for most cultural contexts to include everyone, and there is often an element of selection about where we wish to participate’ (Corbett, 1999, p. 54).

This is something that teachers should consider when applying to new countries because not all cultures can accommodate all beliefs or all political or moral standpoints. Cultures are different and must be respected in whichever school, county or country you may well be teaching in.

There may be certain legalities and laws that schools must adhere to regarding religion or sensitive issues that may be topical in the media. Similarly, schools which choose to follow the British curriculum across the world or Middle East will have their own identity and culture that will be very different to a school that teaches the same curriculum in England. Teachers who plan to teach abroad need to be aware of these differences in culture as well as the laws of the country they are going to.

In school environments, researchers have observed that a sense of belonging significantly and positively influences various motivational factors, including expectations of success, the value placed on schoolwork, and self-reported effort (Goodenow, 1993).

Improving school belonging can also positively impact academic achievement and school engagement (Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodick, & Waters, 2016)

Goodenow (1993a) defines belonging in educational environments as:

“Students’ sense of being accepted, valued, included and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class. More than simple perceived liking or warmth, it also involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual”. (p. 25)

GEMS Metropole School strives for academic excellence by nurturing the potential of every student and fostering a collaborative environment with a sense of belonging for all. The school actively encourages engagement from all parents, stakeholders, and the wider community to support and enhance students' educational journeys. This commitment is encapsulated in the school's slogan, which the principal regularly emphasises in his meet the principal videos reaching out to parents and all stakeholders as #Community.

Furthermore, Roffey (2007) suggests that when leaders provide every child with the chance to excel in all aspects of their development, they are more inclined to promote and sustain an inclusive sense of belonging within the school community. This sentiment is shared by all leaders at GEMS Metropole School, who have received professional development training in January 2024 from Hannah Wilson of DiverseEd. She has been instrumental in leading and paving the way in both the UK and Dubai, delivering training on belonging, race, stereotypes, microaggressions, biases, and discrimination. Her work focuses on educating and raising awareness while creating safe spaces for everyone to feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues.

Belonging at GEMS Metropole School is cultivated through a supportive, inclusive, and student-centred environment that goes beyond superficial warmth to deeply respect and value each student's individuality and contributions to the school community.

Every school possesses a distinct culture. At GEMS Metropole School we have started a journey so that every stakeholder has a sense of belonging too. The most successful cultures are often those crafted with intention and purpose. Therefore, addressing diversity requires a thorough examination of the organisation's cultural context to understand its history and direction. Organisational values, structural frameworks, and policies must align with Diversity, Equity & Inclusion objectives. Otherwise, any efforts will face significant resistance.

For this report both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to uncover trends and patterns. Integrating numerical data analysis with detailed descriptive insights, it aims to derive comprehensive conclusions. This method promotes active engagement with stakeholders, ensuring that the findings are both reliable and actionable. The anecdotal information is confined to select questions within the surveys conducted, while the remainder of the report draws from academic research and insights from the GEMS Metropole School community.





DEEI JOURNEY - (2023/24)



SEPTEMBER

In September, GEMS Metropole School established a **Global Committee** to raise awareness of cross-cultural celebrations and events, driving educational innovation.

The inaugural **Black History Month** celebrated at GEMS Metropole School featured research tasks, competitions, assemblies, and more.

OCTOBER



NOVEMBER

UAE Flag Day and **Diwali** were celebrated at GEMS Metropole through a variety of engaging and educational activities, including assemblies, presentations, and projects.

Our Emirati students actively participated in various activities to raise awareness about their beloved **host nation**.

DECEMBER



JANUARY

As part of the DEEI journey, Hannah Wilson delivered a professional development session for SLT at GEMS Metropole School, emphasising the importance of cultivating a **sense of belonging**.

The Global Committee set up a stand focused on activities aimed at **raising awareness** of the **diverse** countries our students come from, offering a variety of engaging activities.

FEBRUARY



MARCH

The community gathered for a grand **Iftar** event at GEMS Metropole school.

"**World Culture in a Frame**" competition launched, celebrating the diverse cultures within our school community from FS1 to Year 13.

APRIL



MAY

Carried out **DEEI surveys** with students, staff, and parents. Middle leaders conducted subject-specific **curriculum audits**.

We compiled a **DEEI report**, incorporating findings from our community, along with proposed next steps for consideration.

JUNE



Message from the Principal

Dear GEMS Metropole School Community,

It is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I present to you our Annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Report. This comprehensive document captures the sentiments and experiences of our vibrant school community, reflecting our ongoing journey towards fostering a truly inclusive and equitable environment for all. This report is a practice-based research report, which will align academic studies, and international best practice with school-based processes.

At GEMS Metropole School, we are privileged to be part of a multicultural society representing over 100 nationalities. This diversity is our strength, providing a rich tapestry of cultures, perspectives, and traditions that enrich the educational experience for every student. However, our goal is to move beyond simply being a multicultural community. We aspire to become an intercultural society where every individual not only coexists but actively engages, learns from, and respects one another, fostering deeper connections and understanding.

This year's DEI is particularly significant. We have committed to complete transparency, ensuring that we acknowledge both our successes and areas for growth. The report makes for some colourful reading, and we have not held back. This honesty is essential if we are to genuinely address the challenges and celebrate the milestones on our path towards greater inclusivity.

Our approach to DEI is not a static one; it is a dynamic process that evolves each year. We are dedicated to building on our achievements and learning from our experiences. This report provides a roadmap for the future, highlighting our ongoing initiatives and the steps we are taking to ensure that every member of our school community feels valued, respected, and empowered.

As we move forward, we remain committed to fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated, equity is pursued, and inclusion is the norm. This commitment is reflected in our policies, our practices, and most importantly, in the daily interactions that take place within our school. We understand that true progress requires the collective effort of our entire community - students, parents, teachers, and staff. Together, we can create a school culture that not only embraces diversity but thrives because of it.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to making GEMS Metropole School a place where every student can succeed, and every voice is heard. Let us continue to work together to transform our multicultural society into an intercultural community, where unity and mutual respect are the cornerstones of our shared success.



Nav Iqbal
Principal | CEO
GEMS Metropole School

Policies

Why have a DEI Policy?

Having a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy in schools is crucial because it ensures that all students, and staff regardless of their background, feel safe, valued, and included. (Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000) DEI policies help create an environment where every student has an equal opportunity to succeed and where diversity is celebrated as a strength. It's important to recognise that our existing policies may need to be revisited and updated to address current issues and reflect the society we live in.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 was enacted as a direct consequence of the Macpherson Report, which exposed significant shortcomings within the police force and highlighted the need for greater representation of the communities they serve. Despite these findings, it stressed the importance of having institutions that reflect the diversity of their communities. Similarly, our school, situated in a diverse and multicultural city in the UAE, should strive to be more representative of the students, families, and communities we serve. By doing so, we can better meet the needs of our community and foster an inclusive and equitable environment for all. Therefore, our DEI policy must serve as more than just a gesture of warmth. Leaders within the school must ensure the policy acts as a guide for times of uncertainty, always maintaining transparency and integrity when making decisions that impact students, staff, and the community (Norrie, R. 2021).

Writing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy was a journey that involved meticulous research and analysis. Initially, we examined a range of existing policies to understand the standard practices and benchmarks in DEI frameworks. The Equality Act 2010 was also used as a reference point to align our policy to UK law and guidance as a benchmark of established best practice. Although the Equality Act 2010 has nine protected characteristics, due to the nature of where we live and work, we need to align our practice with UAE laws and customs. Through this process, we pinpointed gaps and opportunities for improvement, ensuring our policy was not only inclusive and equitable but also proactive and forward-thinking.

As a school, we want to emphasise that when policies are written and implemented in isolation as simple 'fix-all's' without additional accountability mechanisms, particularly if they are seen as passive HR policies instead of active commitments from leadership, they risk merely masking existing inequities rather than addressing and improving them.

Therefore, as a school now that we have started this journey, we would like to emphasise that this policy is not and has not been written in isolation. It will help guide leaders and make colleagues and the community aware that we take DEI matters seriously. This

policy is not just a document to look good on a website, but a genuine commitment to fostering equity and inclusion (Zheng, 2022).

We aim to complement and reinforce GEMS Education's existing framework of policies, including the GEMS Code of Conduct Policy (POLHR008), Employee Grievance Policy (POLHR0010), Whistleblowing Policy (POLHR0014), Recruitment Policy (POLHR0026) and Harassment and Bullying Policy (POLHR0038). We recognised the need to address critical issues related to direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and microaggressions more effectively from our DEI staff survey. Gaps highlighted the urgent need for a comprehensive DEEI policy that ensures all staff members understand and adhere to our core values of inclusivity and respect.

Compliance with UAE Laws:

Our policy has been carefully aligned with several key laws of the UAE to ensure comprehensive compliance and support for all individuals within our school community. These laws include Federal Decree Law No. 2 of 2015 (Combating Discrimination & Hatred), which provides a framework for preventing and addressing discrimination and hatred; Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 (Concerning the Rights of People with Special Needs), which safeguards the rights of individuals with special needs; Resolution No. 43 of 2018 (In Support of the People of Determination), which promotes the inclusion and support of people of determination; and Article 32 of the UAE Labour Law 1980 (Equal Wages and Salaries for Women and Men), which ensures gender equality in compensation. By aligning with these laws, our policy reflects our commitment to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and equitable environment for all.



Our Team – Staffing and recruitment

We have conducted a thorough review of our current internal recruitment and selection processes. As a result, we have introduced new guidelines for diverse interview panels as part of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy. These guidelines are designed for all leaders to follow, ensuring a fair and equitable process for all candidates.

With the intention to improve the quality of our recruitment process, the DEEI lead within his capacity and when requested to, participated in various interview panels throughout the year. Notably, the Active, and Future Schools alongside the P.E. department implemented a carousel system that exemplified fairness and thoroughness in candidate evaluation. This process was carried out during school working hours and after school to ensure that each candidate was interviewed comprehensively, provided with specific topic areas to discuss, and given the opportunity to present their skills relevant to their respective job roles. This approach is something the school looks to implement across all four schools when interviewing and selecting candidates. This process allows for leaders to compare notes, and make calculated decisions based on merit. Furthermore, for those candidates that were unsuccessful, clear and constructive tailored feedback is given as part of their appraisal cycle.

In the Values School, when similar internal leadership opportunities arose, the DEEI lead was invited to only one interview out of many. This process and not being informed or invited to the interviews led to concerns being raised about fairness from candidates from minority backgrounds who had interviewed, as other candidates who were appointed and shortlisted for more than one position lacked experience or were early career teachers (ECTs). Had the DEEI lead been invited to more interviews within the Values School, the entire process could have been thoroughly reviewed, including application forms, candidate selection criteria, and quality assurance measures. This would have ensured that there is parity and equity in the selection process. The Values school could have done more to involve the DEEI lead to enhance the integrity and fairness of the selection process.

A study done by McKinsey and Company (2023) 'The state of Organisations 2023' claims the following regarding candidates from minority backgrounds:

More than 70 percent of companies surveyed express transformative DEI aspirations, but less than half (47 percent) have the infrastructure in place to realize these aspirations. And more than 20 percent of State of Organizations Survey respondents we asked about the topic can't confirm that there is a sense of community and inclusion in their organizations. This percentage may be even higher: a lack of community in organizations is typically experienced most by employees in underrepresented groups, who also tend to be underrepresented in survey responses. (pg. 43)

A few hard-hitting comments from our staff survey support this view as there were teachers who went for internal promotional positions and were not given the appropriate criteria and feedback as to why they were not successful in securing the position and how they could develop.

- *Professional development that is relevant to each person's own appraisal. Invest in staff properly to get better quality teaching and learning across the school so that it is consistent. Clear criteria for making judgements on interviews to ensure fair and consistent expectations for staff to progress in their career.*
- *I was not given clear next steps and what I can do. Was informed to carry out an action research project.*

An additional explanation provided to candidates was that although they possess the necessary qualifications and experience, they must demonstrate impact at our school. This can be very demoralising for a candidate who has excelled in a different setting, may be the ideal candidate for the job, and holds the correct qualifications and more, only to be told they need to show impact or not held enough experience at GEMS Metropole School. This approach is not equitable or inclusive and furthermore, it was noted that in the most recent Middle Leadership round of interviews, candidates were selected for positions that are still in their ECT years and have less than 1 to 2 years' experience. Therefore, this contradicts the feedback other candidates received from other members of the SLT when they were unsuccessful in their interviews for the same prospective job opportunity. Consequently, this extends the need for clear, fair, and equitable criteria for making judgments in the interview processes across all four schools. Job role advertisements must include the prerequisites of qualifications, experience, and tenure at GEMS Metropole School in the job role descriptions, so candidates are aware of these requirements before applying and therefore, fair judgements can be made purely on the performance of candidates during the interview process.

One of the first steps in transforming the composition of schools is to review recruitment processes to ensure they are genuinely inclusive. For all roles within schools, it is essential to implement a consistent and fair recruitment process to maintain the organisation's success. As a school, we must explore how we can recruit the best candidates in a fair and transparent manner and adopt best practices to ensure candidates experience a positive, fair, and transparent process. Each stage of the recruitment process should be objectively reviewed to guarantee that the organisation operates a truly inclusive, fair, and transparent system, allowing candidates from all backgrounds to thrive. Additionally, feedback needs to improve to ensure that any unsuccessful candidate is given supportive and constructive feedback, with clearly set out targets that they can work towards being successful and develop in future prospective job positions at the school (Ford, S. 2020).

In 2018, the Department for Education issued a statement of intent, setting out the case for a diverse teaching workforce (DfE, 2018b). This focused on the low representation of people from 'ethnic minority backgrounds' in headship, relative to the percentage of teachers from the same backgrounds in the teaching profession. According to a research study done by the NFER, the DfE states that it is the duty of schools to ensure that, when selecting and shortlisting candidates, they are as fair as possible.

'The value of a diverse workforce and school leadership is clear. Diversity within schools is valuable in fostering social cohesion and most importantly, in supporting pupils to grow and develop in an environment of visible, diverse role models. We want to see a teaching profession that prides itself on promoting a diverse workforce, that supports the progression and retention of all teachers, and that builds an inclusive environment for teachers and pupils where they can be themselves.' (DfE, 2018b)

A further study carried out by Demie and See (2022) informs us that in England, teachers of colour are even more under-represented when compared with the pupil population, due to the greater ethnic diversity in younger age groups. In 2021, 13% of teachers were from Black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, compared with 35% of the pupil population (Demie and See, 2022). Although this is an issue in England, most staff at our school are from there, and our student population is made up of students from various backgrounds who might be the minority in England but in the UAE are the majority. Therefore, we must endeavour to ensure that, as a school and organisation, there are no loopholes for favouritism or staff getting positions based on nepotism and friendship groups. This will help us maintain a fair and inclusive environment where merit and diversity are valued so that students have role models to look up to across the staffing body. This view is further supported by Haque and Elliott, (2017) who state that:

'Ethnic minority children need role models from their own group. If the children see SMT (senior management team) as being all White and the cleaning staff from ethnic minorities, that is all they aspire to be. Especially if they do not see people around them or members of their families in senior positions.' (Haque and Elliott, 2017)

The school agrees with these statements and continues to refine and review its systems and processes to ensure similar instances do not occur in the future. While these systems and processes cannot be implemented for every interview, the school endeavours to ensure fairness in all recruitment practices to ensure staff retention. When there are many internal candidates and positions available for promotion, the school desires to promote from within. While interviews with one or two candidates may not be conducted on this scale, our commitment to providing all candidates with a fair opportunity remains firm.



“Invest in staff properly to get better quality teaching and learning across the school so its consistent.”

GEMS Metropole School DEI Staff Survey 2024



Community Voice

Student belonging survey findings

In recent years, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has become a hub for families from around the globe, drawn by its dynamic economy and diverse opportunities. This influx has created a unique demographic of students known as 'third culture kids,' who often navigate the complexities of not fully belonging to either their host country or their parents' home countries. To address these challenges, we conducted a student belonging survey to evaluate how well our school is meeting the needs of our students. The survey aims to understand whether we are providing the necessary support to foster a sense of belonging and identity, ensuring that these students do not feel lost in the cultural mosaic of the UAE.

Donohue (2022) defines Third Culture Kid as:

“Third culture kids (TCKs) are individuals who have lived outside of their parent(s) passport country for more than a year, before the age of 18 for temporary reasons, such as a parent’s work or advanced training.” (Donohue, 2022, p. 47).

Tanu (2020) states the importance of international schools bringing a sense of belonging and comfort within its parameters:

“International schools are places where such students “Third Culture Kids” can be expected to feel most comfortable, where they can escape the parochialism and poverty of life outside their educational setting and where they can experiment with a diversity of cultural expressions”. (Tanu, 2020, p. 10).

Out of 614 students who took part in the survey in the Active and Future schools, 21 students (3%) recognised the UAE as their home country, however, these students identified as being of other nationalities (non-UAE nationals) and some of these students do have dual nationalities (see Figure 1). From the student survey results, 50 students (8%) answered 'no' when asked if identifying their home country was an easy question to answer. This raises an area of concern for those students who feel confused as to their sense of belonging and national identity. This would need to be looked at more closely moving forward.

Tree Map Chart illustrating the percentages of students' nationalities, including passport holders from various countries, who identify the UAE as their home.

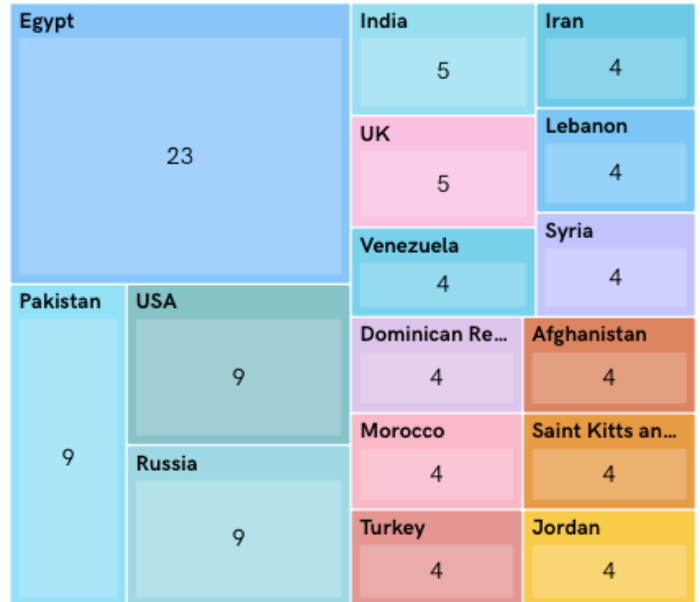


Figure 1

Donohue (2022) further suggests that only students who are immersed in these experiences can identify with this feeling of uncertainty of their home geographic location.

“The third culture kid is without a single geographical location, language, religion, race, nationality, or ethnicity. These constructs are often the foundation through which people identity and find belonging. However, the third culture only exists in relational bonds between shared experiences of existing in transition and cultural multiplicity.” (Donohue, 2022, p. 47)

In contrast, 90% respondents of the student survey agree/strongly agree that they have a strong sense of belonging to their home country. Additionally, many students 85% agree/strongly agree that they have a strong sense of belonging to the UAE (See figure 2 & 3 below).

Pie Chart illustrating the percentage of students who strongly identify with the UAE.

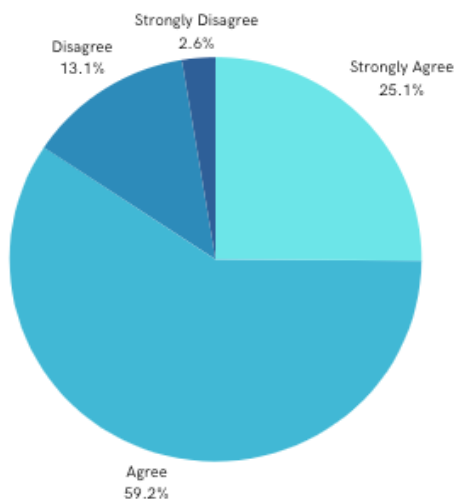


Figure 2

Pie Chart depicting the percentages of students who have a strong sense of belonging to their home country.

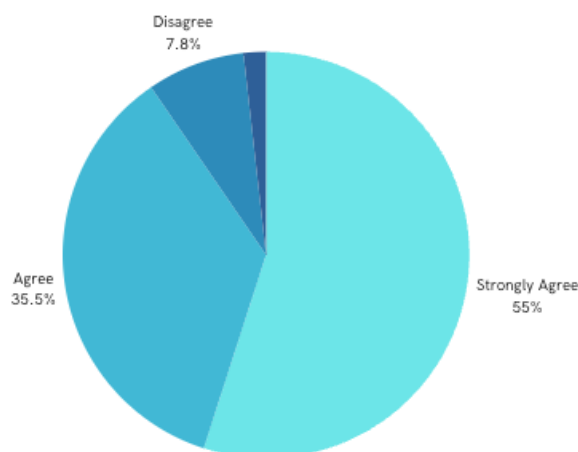


Figure 3

However, Donohue (2022) theory shares several key features which relate to the results of the student survey as she discusses ‘belonging’ as a frequent, reoccurring and complex theme among Third Culture Kids.

“For many, belonging is discussed in a manner that indicates a sense of being able to adapt to any social, cultural, or environmental context, without feeling at home in it.” (Donohue, 2022, p. 53).

The results from the student survey are found to be similarly to the theory of Moore and Barker, (2012) who support this idea that a sense of belonging for Third Culture Kids is an in-between state.

“There are little things that you’ll pick up everywhere you live, whether it’s values or traditions that you take with you everywhere you go, so you’re not 100 per cent entirely at home anywhere”. (Moore and Barker, 2012, p. 558).

However, it is important to mention the student survey highlighted a total of 10 students (2%) who do not have a strong sense of belonging to the UAE nor their home country. This small minority from the student survey align with the theory of Tanu (2020) who suggests that Third Culture Kids are:

“Transnational youth who have their own folklores with which they imagine their identities and collective histories.” (Tanu, 2020, 237).

The school and celebrating culture.

Out of 614 respondents, only 347 (57%) combined agree/strongly agreed that the school does recognise their home country. The remaining 267 (43%) students did not feel that the school does enough to recognise their home country.

Similarly, 335 (55%) student respondents said that the school celebrates their home country and any cultural traditions related to their home country. 274 (45%) students said that the school does not celebrate their home country or any cultural traditions.

From the 274 (45%) responses, the following hard-hitting comments stood out for where and how students felt the school does not recognise or celebrate their home country/traditions.

- *“The school only mentions Britain.”*
- *“I’m from India, and it’s just that the only things celebrated in school are related to the UAE or the UK.”*
- *“The only thing that has to do with Arabs in general is Ramadan there should be more events for other Arab countries.”*
- *“I genuinely do not see this school celebrating any countries that are a “minority” here.”*

“I get by because I’m quiet but if people think an Indian person is ‘annoying’ they get racist remarks made about them especially if their Hindu.”



GEMS Metropole Student Belonging Survey 2024

In conclusion, the results highlighted that many students felt a strong sense of belonging to the UAE and to GEMS Metropole School. However, the survey findings also identified that there are still many students who do not feel they have a sense of belonging to either and find it difficult to identify with their home country. This has raised several questions for the school and areas for further development regarding catering to the needs of these students. Furthermore, the survey results have brought to light instances of racism within the school. Addressing this issue will be a key focus, as the school aims to raise awareness among students and engage the entire school community in efforts to combat racism and foster a more inclusive environment.



Insights and Results from the DEI Staff Survey

All staff members including teaching assistants, teachers, middles leaders, senior leaders and admin staff were invited to participate in our first ever DEI survey. Our goal was to create a platform for staff to express their concerns openly and honestly about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. In a large school setting with a staffing body of 257 (as of May 2024), it is crucial for staff to feel safe and assured that issues or concerns raised will be thoroughly investigated and taken seriously.

Additionally, they need to understand that their voices matter, especially since, unlike in the UK where colleagues may have been part of a union, when they make that transition abroad, they realise there are no unions in the UAE. It is important to clarify that the role of the DEEI Lead is not to act as a union representative. Instead, the DEEI Lead serves as a point of contact where colleagues can confidentially raise DEI concerns, knowing they have a safe space to talk and that their issues will be addressed and looked in to from a quality assurance perspective to ensure all systems and processes were followed correctly to help build trust and transparency among staff.

Collecting reliable data through surveys can be challenging. A survey captures a snapshot of reality at a single point in time and cannot establish causation. Therefore, it is essential for leadership to address and act upon the survey findings. A lack of data transparency and an unwillingness to act on all survey findings can significantly erode trust and demoralise the workforce (Zheng, 2022).



The staff survey received 161 (63%) responses and the following data (see Figure 4) highlights the various/multiple ethnic groups that work at GEMS Metropole School. It is noteworthy that some staff belong to multiple ethnic groups.

Bar Chart to show Staff Ethnic Groups

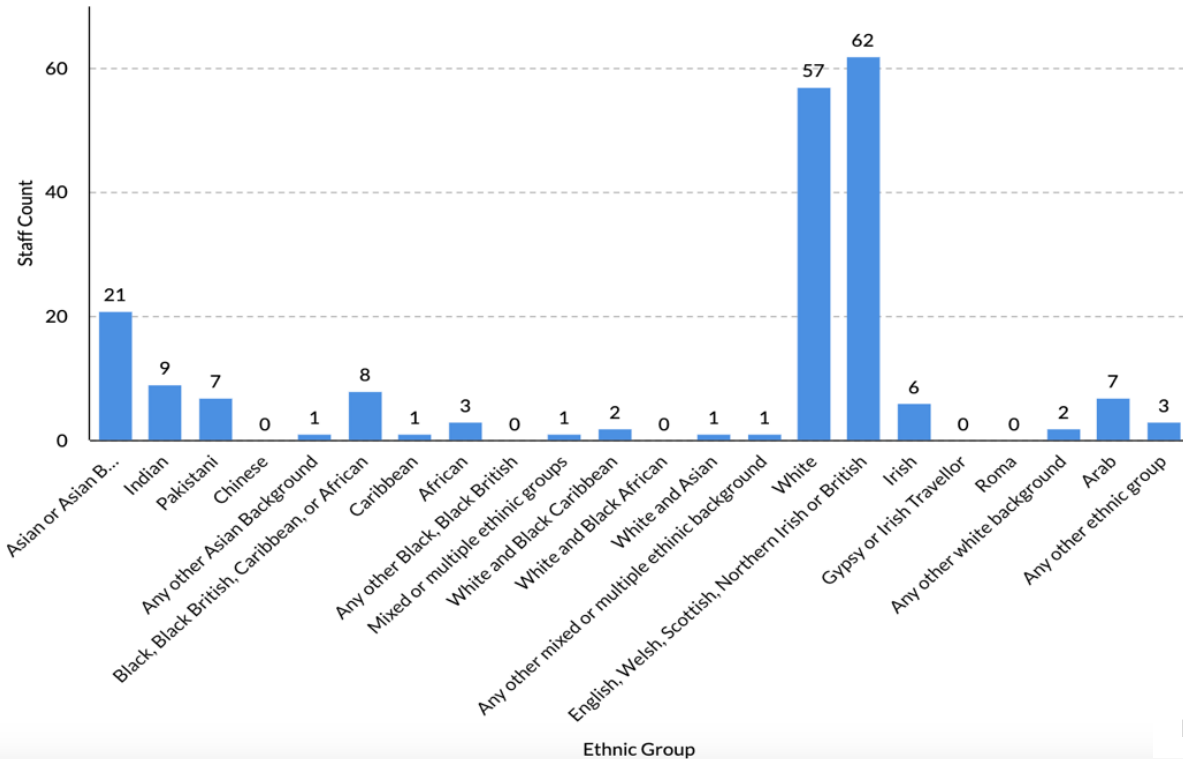


Figure 4

Out of 161 responses, 39 staff (25%) stated that they had experienced instances of racism, discrimination or bias in the workplace. The data below (Figure 5) shows the various ethnicities that selected 'yes' as an option to this question.

Bar Chart to show number of staff - 39 (25%) who said 'yes' to having experienced racism, discrimination or bias at work.

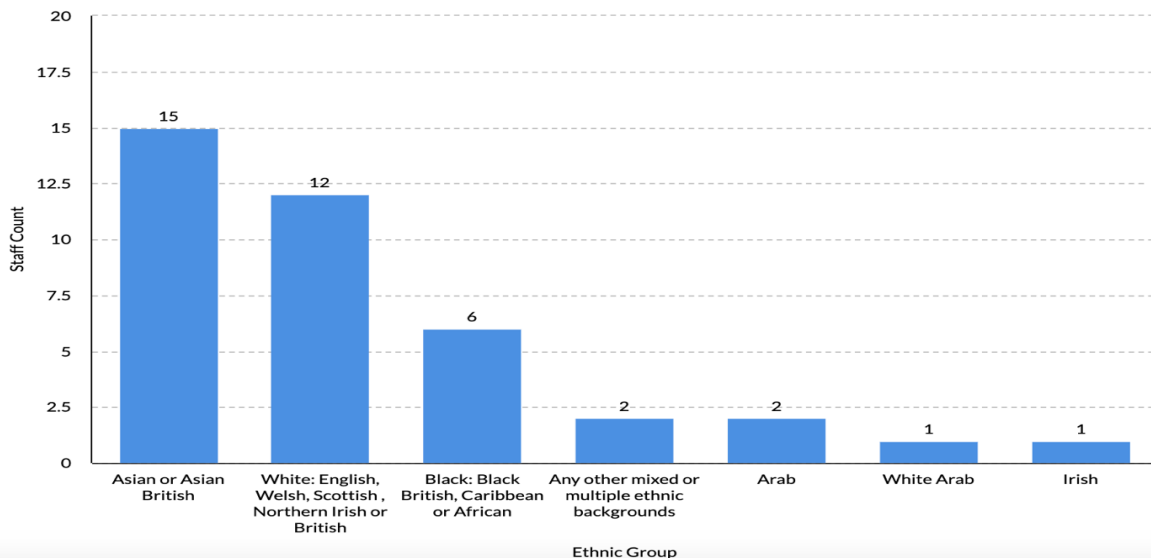


Figure 5

Figure 5 shows that staff who had experienced instances of racism in the workplace at GEMS Metropole School are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The following comment was taken from the staff survey in response to racial experiences within the school and regarding promotional opportunities:

I feel as though the ethnic community (staff) within school can't compete with some of the white teachers as they are so close together. It feels as they won't give anyone a chance unless it's their own friends if its due to favouritism or racism, I can't be sure.



GEMS Metropole School DEI Staff Survey 2024

Jenaibi (2012) had similar findings in her study on diversity within the UAE, as she mentions, there was a relatively strong agreement that bias existed in favour of employees from “prestigious nations” (The United States, England, the EU) in company promotion. Her results show that employees mentioned this practice as a clear violation of their rights and expressed the belief that it is crucial for each employee to be respected regardless of her or his nationality (Al-Jenaibi, 2012). Additionally, Allen et al. (2004) supports this as she puts forward that employees who hail from prestigious and wealthy nations often assume high positions within organisations.

As the majority of staff, 82%, that are recruited to work at GEMS Metropole School are from the UK, it is vital going forward, that the school have an initiative to educate the expatriate staffing body about the national UAE customs and culture as well as workshops to raise awareness about cultural sensitivity and accepting other cultures, as they are working and residing in a place which is home to people of more than 200 nationalities and various cultures. This will also aim to minimise cultural ignorance between staffing members as cultural ignorance can be occasionally interpreted as culturally inappropriate or giving racist remarks (Venaik & Brewer 2016). Similarly, Al-Jenaibi’s (2012) research suggests that it important for employees in the UAE to accept other people’s cultures as it provides the capability to communicate better with people belonging to various backgrounds. This sheds light on introducing these initiatives for GEMS Metropole School staff as part of professional development and induction practices about learning the language of acceptance to communicate with cultural sensitivity, in hopes to reduce racism and discrimination within the workplace. Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) supports this theory as they suggest that an individual must also learn variations in communication that can occur, interpret communication differences in productive ways, and make effective choices about how to communicate across the numerous organisational boundaries that exist within a business community (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo,1983).

When asked if the school fosters diversity, equity and inclusivity, the results were mixed. Overall, a combined 58% (see Figure 6) of staff respondents agree that GEMS Metropole School fosters diversity, equity and inclusivity and a combined 42% only somewhat agree or completely disagree that the school does not. Therefore, this suggests that the school needs to investigate promoting and raising the awareness of DEI within its community for it to have a greater impact.

A pie chart illustrating whether staff feel the workforce fosters diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

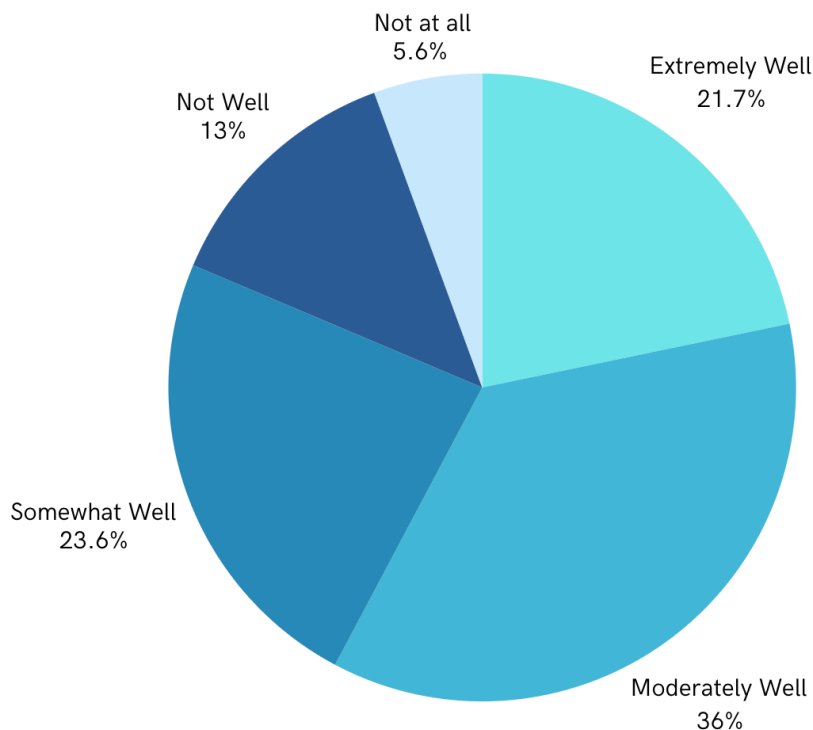


Figure 6

Similarly, in Al-Jenaibi's (2012) study, the results of her findings also show that employers in the UAE should create new rules that accommodate cultural differences and there needs to be sufficient action to create awareness regarding diversity both internally and externally in organisations. Although Al-Jeneiabi's (2012) research focused on UAE official's perspectives regarding diversity within the nation, the results from the GEMS Metropole School DEI staff survey also have similar trends within their results and suggest alike areas for development within the school. Officials interviewed from Al-Jenaibi's (2012) study, in comparison, generally held a more cautious view toward the subject of diversity from a nationwide perspective, raising both economic and nationalistic questions about the amount of diversity found in UAE organizations, especially in the private sector.

Staff from the four different schools predominantly provided suggestions on enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace and in the professional development context for the school's future.

"A PD on how to deal with children acting in disrespectful (not necessarily racist) ways. Being given language rich sessions to explain why things like impersonating accents can be disrespectful. (would also like to learn the national anthem)"

"Clear information on what we can include from other cultures in our teaching i.e., world culture celebrations such as Chinese New Year, Holi etc."

"A little more knowledge and understanding around UAE law related to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion."

"A PD on the UAE in more detail - suggested reading. Islamic and Arabic mini-PD sessions - a bit like the lessons the students get to understand better. Again, a suggested reading list here would be good. Perhaps the secondary library could have a dedicated cultural area with some new texts."

"How to respond to discriminatory comments made by students or staff."

"Clear guidelines about how to foster diversity in the classrooms with practical suggestions."

"Anti-racism and anti-bias training. A lot of your white staff are not educated about what is racist when they witness their students saying/doing something and dismiss it as being less than it is, and they are unaware of their own biases against students and colleagues. Offer Arabic lessons to the staff, even basics to make staff feel more at home here."



GEMS Metropole School DEI Staff Survey 2024

"To raise awareness of different forms of diversity such as neuro and generational diversity, that people may be unaware of. To have practical PD's raising awareness of different cultures, ethnicities and regions. Bring in outside organisations or even families to share experiences."



GEMS Metropole School DEI Staff Survey 2024

"For staff: have training on nuances of racial experiences in the workplace and know how to deal with these appropriately when dealing with staff, microaggressions in the workplace - what this may look like and how to support staff with this. Being aware of conscious and unconscious bias in ourselves (we all have them) which can affect how we manage and work alongside our team and other staff."



GEMS Metropole School DEI Staff Survey 2024



When asked if staff felt valued at school, the majority of respondent, 75% of staff, said yes and 25% of staff said no. It is important to mention that 16% of the 25% who said no, also experienced racism. Therefore, the above figure could suggest that those who have experienced racism have low staff morale. Mallik, Mallik & DS (2019) further affirms that organisational conduct among employees affects the nature of work, especially on the level of resolving any disparity among them.

The following comments, taken from the staff survey highlights that staff do not feel valued as their work is not appreciated.

- *You don't get the fair credit you deserve for the hard work you put in.*
- *Staff should be rewarded based on merit and hard work not based on how often they play golf together or go brunching.*

However, White (2014) suggests that staff will only feel valued when they feel true and personal, individualised appreciation, rather than just recognition for their work. Additionally, the following comment was taken from the staff survey, as part of staff voice, and shows a positive relationship to White's (2014) theory.

- *I think the school needs to foster a better work-place culture and giving everyone the opportunity to feel equally valued through appreciating the work they do and supporting them to do their job well. The more empowered and valued they are, the more included they will feel.*

Therefore, the school needs to create a culture, along with systems and processes, that fosters individual appreciation for its staff, recognising them as valued members of the school community and not just for their work. This approach will enhance a supportive and rewarding environment, thereby improving the staff's sense of belonging.

On the other hand, a positive response of 63% of staff said they had been given enough opportunities to grow and develop in their career, however, 37% said no.

The following hard-hitting comments were found in response to why staff felt they did not get opportunities to grow and develop their career and are suggestions where favouritism is present within the school:

- *Some people who have a good relationship outside of school with the HOD get preferential treatment and those of us who come in early and work hard don't stand a chance for progression opportunities.*
- *The school should train the leaders on how to be fair with staff, the same rules should apply to everyone, and staff should be rewarded based on merit and hard work not based on how often they play golf together or go brunching.*

The Curriculum Audit

Parent Ambassadors voice

During a recent professional development session, the DEEI lead delivered an enlightening presentation to the Parent Ambassadors on the crucial topics of Creating a Sense of Belonging and Internationalising the Curriculum. This session proved to be highly insightful for the parents, who were not only impressed by the depth and relevance of the content but also gained numerous useful facts and a fresh perspective on viewing the school from an outsider's vantage point.

The findings from the Parent Ambassador survey revealed that 89% of parents agree that students at GEMS Metropole show respect for one another. This is a positive outcome as it is in line with the school values that are greatly promoted within the school as part of their ethos.

When asked if the current curriculum provided gives cultural identity for all students, 100 % of parents responded 'No'. Therefore, this is an area that needs to be investigated from a school wide perspective to ensure that cultural identity is visible in teaching and learning and within the school environment. Mark (2017) supports this idea in his article *'International Mindedness is a Frame of Mind'* as he puts forward the theory that international schools should provide students the opportunity to be 'internationally minded' and have 'international mindfulness'. Similarly, Fail (2011) debates the nature of an international curriculum and it should promote 'global citizenship', 'mutual understanding' and 'cultural awareness' and it should outline the intercultural behaviours.

In relation to the above question, below are some of the impactful comments, provided by parents, about their preferences with regards to the curriculum, to give students at GEMS Metropole more international and culturally diverse of opportunities for learning.

- *"Introduce more language classes".*
- *"Have language classes for children coming from different countries. Like Urdu or Chinese, Hindi. Keeps the kids more connected to their roots too".*
- *"Discipline topics".*
- *"Life Skills".*

“Introduce languages like Mandarin, Hindi, Russian and German which are internationally spoken and are relative to the languages spoken in the UAE”.



GEMS Metropole School Parent Ambassadors Voice 2024

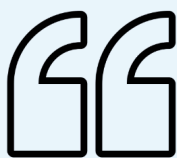
From the above mentioned in the parent survey results, it is noteworthy for the school to consider providing additional and a variety of language options relevant to the student body and the world around them for the future development of the school and internationalising the curriculum. According to Buchanan (2014) international schools should provide a rigorous and comprehensive cross-cultural education that immerses students in multiple languages and gives them access to a global, mobile community that is defined by its internationalism. Additionally, Gellar (2018) supports this theory as he argues that international schools should provide a curriculum that emphasises studies in world cultures, stressing the inter-dependence of nations and peoples, and de-emphasising the study of such topics from the perspective of only one country or a select region

Moreover, 56% of parents who completed the survey said ‘No’ to when asked if they agreed that the school provides balanced books for boys and girls. Therefore, this is an additional area to delve into when looking at the resources provided to support learning in classrooms and around the school, ensuring there is a balance of books that equally appeals to both boys and girls. Estyn, corp creator. (2008) suggests that it is important for schools to consider having a wide range of resources that appeal to both boys and girls when covering the curriculum, in order not to hinder on students realising their potential. Additionally, Estyn, corp creator. (2008) goes on to argue that schools should refine approaches to learning and teaching by challenging the stereotypical perceptions and making changes to the curriculum. These changes include providing more of the practical and vocational courses that appeal to both boys and girls. Next year, with this strategy in mind and part of the school development plan, GEMS Metropole School intends to offer more vocational courses such as BTEC pathways in engineering and construction.

Finally, 100% of parents voted ‘extremely useful’ when being asked to rate the usefulness of the presentation provided on diversity and internationalising the curriculum. Therefore, from this, we can conclude that the topic of discussion is of interest to parents and is an area to explore, deepening their understanding and those stakeholders’ part of the GEMS Metropole community considering diversity and internationalising the curriculum.

A former student who is now at University in England and who was kind enough to share her thoughts and contribute to the report shared her opinion as to how and why GEMS Metropole School had helped her settle into a society that was completely new to her having lived most of her life here in the UAE.

I am currently a student at the University of Manchester, which is ranked second across the UK for the number of international students. I am immensely grateful for my time at GEMS Metropole School, as growing up in such a diverse and multicultural school environment equipped me with what I need to be able to fit into an equally diverse, if not more, environment at university. Had I not grown up in a school environment like GEMS Metropole School, I can say with certainty that my transition to university and settling into a new and completely different environment would have been much less seamless than it was.



GEMS Metropole School Alumni 2024



Middle Leaders PD session and survey findings

The DEEI lead delivered a professional development session for all Middle Leaders, aiming to introduce the concept of constructing a curriculum that truly fits our students' needs. While we remain committed to delivering the British National Curriculum, we recognise the unique multicultural composition of the UAE, the largest hub in the Middle East for diverse nationalities, backgrounds, and ethnicities. This session emphasised the importance of making subtle yet significant adjustments to our curriculum to ensure greater representation of underrepresented backgrounds. This approach will ensure that our students have visible role models within the curriculum. It is essential to provide them with perspectives beyond Western or Eurocentric viewpoints. They should experience a diverse range of influences and see people of colour represented throughout their learning journey. After all, you cannot be, what you cannot see.

Professor Betty Leask has been leading the field of internationalising the curriculum in universities worldwide. Her research and foundational framework in this area have become benchmarks that institutions must consider when developing a curriculum suitable for their needs. She asserts the following:



‘Internationalisation of the curriculum is the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning arrangements and support services of a program study’ (Leask, 2009, p. 209)

Professor Betty Leask

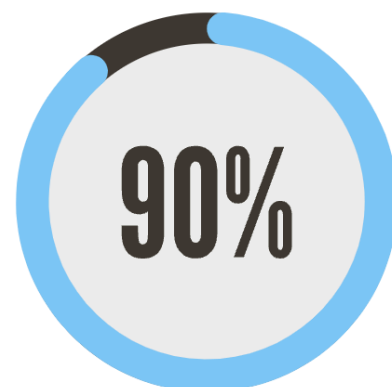
Additionally, it is essential for all teachers, not just the Middle Leaders, who plan lessons or design curriculums or schemes of work in the four respective schools to grasp the concept of internationalising the curriculum. While it is easy to call for greater representation, the real question is whether our staff have the knowledge and ability to think beyond their usual perspectives and paradigms to achieve this. This can be challenging for academic staff. A study carried out by Kuhn (1996) suggests that academic staff have been socialised into their discipline. Through that process they have developed a sense of identity and personal commitment to the shared values and associated ways of doing, thinking and being embedded within dominant paradigms of their discipline communities (Kuhn, 1996). This approach to thinking and teaching may pose a challenge for UK teachers who are not accustomed to planning and delivering curricula in this manner, especially when developing a new curriculum. Becher and Trowler (2002) support

this view, arguing that academic staff are often constrained by their own disciplinary training and cultural backgrounds (Becher & Trowler, 2002).

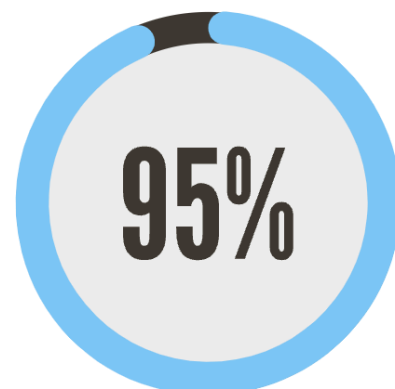
The session was intriguing from the start, as the DEEI lead assured the Middle Leaders that it was a safe space where they could express their thoughts and feelings openly. The purpose of this approach was to ensure that psychological safety was paramount during the session. Given that the Middle Leaders might never have had to think in this way or be made to feel uncomfortable with the topics being discussed, it was crucial to create an environment where they could express themselves freely without fear of judgment. This allowed for open, honest conversations that are necessary for meaningful change. Fullan's (2007) model of leadership, '*Leading in a Culture of Change*' although first developed in a business context then enabled the DEEI lead to facilitate open conversations, understanding that building relationships with colleagues is integral to the change process. Leading in a culture of change involves fostering a culture - not just a structure - of change. This approach is not about continually adopting new innovations; rather, it is about developing the capacity to consistently seek out, critically evaluate, and selectively integrate new ideas and practices, both within and outside the organisation.

If Middle Leaders lack engagement or motivation, it raises concerns about how they will effectively communicate information to teachers who will be planning lessons or schemes of work. Therefore, creating a sense of urgency was crucial during the delivery of this professional development session, emphasising that the construction of the curriculum is a collaborative effort (Kotter, 2024). Despite encouragement, Middle Leaders hesitated to reflect on their personal journeys and reasons for coming to the UAE, showing reluctance to share, possibly due to fatigue or discomfort discussing personal experiences on a Tuesday afternoon. Fortunately, the Head of Primary stepped in by sharing her own journey and motivations for working in the UAE. This initiative not only broke the ice but also enriched the depth of our discussion.

Survey results indicate that a significant 90% of Middle Leaders considered the content of Internationalising the Curriculum PD session to be highly or somewhat relevant to their specific subject area or department. Furthermore, an impressive 95% of Middle Leaders responded positively, finding the PD session to be highly or somewhat effective in enhancing their understanding of the concept of



of middle leaders found it relevant

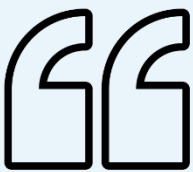


of middle leaders responded positively

internationalising the curriculum. Therefore, this suggests that Middle Leaders show a keen interest in the concept of internationalising the curriculum relevant to their subject and age-related phases across the four schools.

The majority of Middle Leaders (90%) responded that they were extremely or somewhat confident to apply the strategies to internationalise the curriculum suggested and delivered within the PD session. However, the results from the survey show that staff requested that they would need additional support and resources to facilitate the action of internationalising the curriculum relevant to their departmental subjects and different age phases. The following comments were given by staff in relation to the specific support or resources needed to action the above mentioned sufficiently.

“Support from the rest of the working party subject planners and general attitude of all staff to ensure this is implemented”.



GEMS Metropole School Staff PD 2024

“Further PD on this also for teachers.”

“Time to review the curriculum thoroughly. School year is so packed with events and requirements from a range of people it is hard to tick all boxes.”

“More time for teachers and Head of Years to plan for this effectively, one hour PD a term to plan isn’t enough.”

“More examples and options to do this in different subjects and topics areas.”

“Examples from other schools who have Internationalised the Curriculum to show impact.”

“Budget to allow resources to support this transition.”

From the above mentioned in the survey, it is important that the school provides Middle Leaders and teachers sufficient support and resources to ensure that this is carried out consistently and coherently across all four schools. Similar to Kotter’s (2024) approach, Özdemir *et al.* (2016) suggest staff are not always receptive of change in educational organisations. To make the necessary change and achieve positive outcomes when understanding cultural differences and cultural sensitivities at GEMS Metropole School, it is crucial for teaching staff to have a clear understanding of the purpose (Özdemir *et al.* 2016) behind internationalising the curriculum, including what, why, and how of our

approach. This understanding is essential to provide the best learning opportunities for our students. Additionally, to cope with this resistance and promote change successfully, teaching staff are encouraged to agree with the decision by way of taking ownership of their subject area or departmental phase respectively within the effective plan (Özdemir *et al.* 2016).

In an increasingly globalised world, cultural dexterity is becoming an essential skill. Effective interaction and collaboration with individuals from diverse cultures are now crucial in our interconnected society. Cultural dexterity extends beyond mere awareness or understanding of different cultures. It includes the skills, attitudes, and behaviours necessary for individuals to interact and collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds in an inclusive, respectful, and effective manner. It requires open-mindedness, empathy, and a willingness to learn from others' perspectives (Bensla, A. 2023).

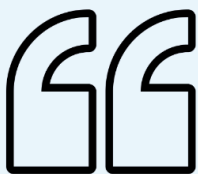


Emiratisation

Since August 2023, we have been actively recruiting Emirati citizens and welcoming them to our school. We are proud to announce that by the end of this academic year (23/24), we have successfully met our target and have a total of 25 wonderful colleagues who are eager to learn about the education profession. These new colleagues are given a proper induction to school life and have the flexibility to shadow teachers in various phases and year groups before finding their comfort zone and settling in.

A recent colleague who joined had this to say about her experience with GEMS Metropole thus far:

The process from start to finish was efficient, effective and smooth. The interview process was very to the point and the environment was made for me to feel safe. I was informed more or less immediately of the outcome of the interview process. Furthermore, the tour of the school was fantastic whereby I came to realise there was also a mini farm. Now I am settled in the primary Art department, and I enjoy coming to school daily.



GEMS Metropole School Emirati Colleague 2024

The UAE government has been striving to boost the number of Emiratis in the private sector through its Emiratisation drive. While public sector hours and wages have traditionally been more attractive, the government is encouraging Emiratis to develop more skills in the workforce. In September 2022, authorities introduced quotas for hiring Emiratis, giving private companies deadlines to meet these targets.

Private sector companies with at least 50 employees were required to ensure that 3 percent of their workforce was comprised of Emiratis by July 7. On July 11, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation updated the rules to include private companies with 20 to 49 employees in the Emiratisation drive. The new rules apply to companies across 14 economic sectors, including property, education, construction, and health care.

The Emirati employment rate is projected to increase to 6 percent in 2024, 8 percent in 2025, and 10 percent in 2026. These end-of-year goals remain in place, but private businesses must now ensure they reach these targets with a 1 percent increase every six months. The measures apply to skilled positions, and while companies in free zones are exempt, they are encouraged to participate in the scheme. Businesses are asked to increase the number of citizens they hire by 2 percent each year to reach 10 percent by the start of 2027.

Our Emirati staff have been successful in securing the below job roles at GEMS Metropole School (see Figure 7).

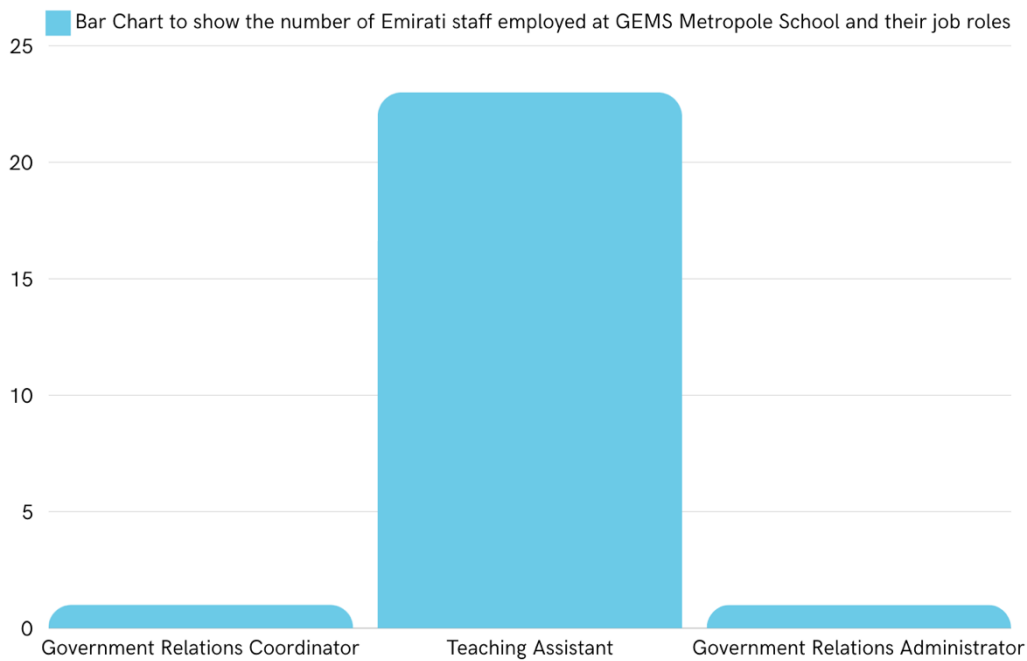


Figure 7

Limitations

We have encountered certain limitations on our journey to meet our target. There is a limited number of online portals where the CVs of potential Emirati staff are uploaded. Additionally, our HR department and Senior Leaders have attended a few recruitment fairs to attract Emirati staff.

We have also struggled to attract male Emirati workers, as most of our Emirati staff are female. Something we wish to address and look to employ more Emirati men next year.

Despite tireless efforts to find Emirati staff for positions other than Teaching Assistants, we have not been successful this year. Moving forward, the school aims to attract Emirati staff to apply for roles, other than teaching assistant roles, in various areas of the school. Those who have secured Teaching Assistant roles and who already have a degree, will be encouraged to complete a PGCE to embark on their teaching career.

The attendance of Emirati staff is an issue we aim to address next year. This year, we have experienced poor overall attendance, leading to secondary effects within the departments where these colleagues are allocated. Moving forward, we will be working closely with our HR department to monitor and track the attendance of all Emirati staff in line with our attendance policy to ensure equity and inclusivity for all colleagues.

Furthermore, the attrition rate of newly joined Emirati staff is also an issue. The trend has been that they join and then move on after a few months, raising commitment concerns. We have been working hard to ensure they are allocated according to their working preferences where possible. Appraisal cycles will be conducted with our Emirati staff, setting them clear goals which align with their line of work and interests at school. Additionally, well-being and fortnightly check-ins with our Emirati staff will be conducted by the Higher-Level Teaching Assistant and the DEEI Lead to follow up with any areas of concerns, ensuring our Emirati staff are made to feel at home and have a place to grow here at GEMS Metropole School.



Success Stories

Here are a handful of success stories that, as a community, we are proud to share. These accomplishments highlight our collective efforts and the remarkable achievements of our students. Please see the photos attached below.



01

INTERNATIONAL DAY

International Day was a success, featuring the Global Committee Leaders' stand. They engaged with students and staff through quizzes and competitions on flags, languages, and countries. Participants received bookmarks with inspirational quotes. The event celebrated our school's diversity, and we're excited to host it again next year.

02

GLOBAL COMMITTEE LEADERS

The Global Committee Leaders, elected from Years 3 to 13, are a key part of student leadership and will continue next year with new elections. Meeting every half term via Microsoft Teams, they discussed important issues and planned events like assemblies, themed mornings, and International Day to promote cultural awareness throughout the year.

03

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

We celebrated Black History Month for the first time, featuring assemblies and activities that highlighted the contributions of Black individuals in history. Students researched Black leaders, artists, and musicians, and assemblies showcased figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Marcus Rashford, and Muhammad Ali. Cultural activities included art projects and music performances, culminating in a Whole School Art competition. Winners received Virgin vouchers. The event was a success, and we will continue celebrating Black History Month next year.

04

CHINESE NEW YEAR

We celebrated and wished our Chinese community a very happy Chinese New Year. This year, our Foundation Stage students were interviewed by one of our Year 10 students, sharing their insights on how they celebrate the New Year with their families. The young students enthusiastically described various traditions, including special meals and the importance of sharing dishes such as dumplings and rice cakes, highlighting the joy and cultural significance of this festive season.

05

GRAND IFTAR

This year, our grand Iftar, celebrated on the astro turf at school like every year, was well attended by students, staff, and parents from the community. It truly is heartwarming to see a community come together during this auspicious occasion. It was a time to reflect, come together, and understand the importance of Ramadan, the holy month. We broke our fasts with dates and traditional foods, fostering a sense of unity and shared spiritual growth.

06

FLAG DAY

U.A.E. Flag Day is a national occasion where people of the UAE honour the founders, Sheikh Zayed, and Sheikh Rashid who sacrificed everything for the nation. Students and staff commemorated the occasion and raised the flag at 11am as a mark of respect and honour for our host nation. It was a time to renew the national spirit and reflect on the achievements of the late President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The UAE flag symbolises justice, peace, tolerance, power, and moderation, reflecting the legacy of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and ensuring a secure and stable life for all Emiratis.



International Day



Global Committee Leaders



BHM



Chinese New Year



Grand Iftar



Flag Day



Projected DEEI Road Map - (2024/25)



SEPTEMBER

We will partner with **Angie Browne**, CEO of **Being Luminary**, to enhance our DEI journey by reviewing and improving all systems and processes and work with alongside **BSME Schools**.

This will be our second year celebrating **Black History Month** at GEMS Metropole School, following last year's inaugural event that featured research tasks, competitions, assemblies, and more.

OCTOBER



NOVEMBER

Invite a renowned cricketer to inaugurate our new **cricket nets** and speak to students about the topic of racism. They will also have the honour of cutting the ribbon for this new facility.

Our Emirati students will actively participate in various activities to raise awareness about their beloved **host nation**.

DECEMBER



JANUARY

Middle Leaders will start and complete a short course on **Internationalising the Curriculum** with Professor Betty Leask throughout the year. This course will enhance their leadership skills and professional development.

The **Global Committee** will set up a stand focused on activities aimed at raising awareness of the **diverse countries** our students come from, offering a variety of engaging activities.

FEBRUARY



MARCH

Depending on the moon, we aim to host a grand **Iftar** event at GEMS Metropole School, where the community will come together.

The "**World Culture in a Frame**" competition will be launched for the second year, celebrating the diverse cultures within our school community from FS1 to Year 13.

APRIL



MAY

We will carry out **DEEI** surveys with students, staff, and parents. These surveys will inform our decision-making process for next year and our report findings.

We will compile our **second DEI** report, with a significant focus on curriculum enhancements, including an assessment of our impact on internationalising the curriculum.

JUNE



Moving forward



Policy recommendations:

- **Enhance Stakeholder Engagement:** Increase involvement of all stakeholders, including students, staff, and parents, in the DEI policy review process next year through regular surveys, focus groups, and feedback sessions. Furthermore, introduce a zero-tolerance policy on DEI issues and set standards for inclusive and welcoming behaviour.
- **Implement Continuous Training and Development:** Develop and implement a comprehensive DEI training program for all staff, incorporating current best practices, cultural competency, and anti-bias education. Ensure ongoing professional development opportunities are available to keep staff updated on DEI advancements and strategies.
- **Reading and understanding the policy:** Staff must understand the DEI policy prohibits racial, bias or discriminatory remarks or actions involving stakeholders. They should also know the corrective steps required if they unintentionally offend any stakeholder. Finally, staff need to understand the consequences that will follow any actions contradicting the DEI policy.

Staffing and recruitment recommendations:

- **Ensure Merit-Based recruitment and selection:** Review and refine the recruitment process to ensure that colleagues are selected and shortlisted based solely on merit. Establish clear, standardised criteria for each stage of the recruitment process to promote fairness and objectivity.
- **Promote Equitable and Inclusive Practices:** Develop comprehensive guidelines that detail each step of the recruitment process, from application and shortlisting to interviews and feedback. Ensure these guidelines emphasise equity and inclusivity, providing transparency and consistency throughout the entire process.
- **Senior leaders to review:** The interview processes across all four schools to implement a centralised system that promotes transparency and fairness. Additionally, the DEEI lead is encouraged, wherever possible, to participate in interview panels. This proactive involvement enables the DEEI lead to investigate any concerns if they arise through a quality assurance perspective, thereby upholding and strengthening the integrity of the entire process.

Student belonging recommendations:

- **Supporting Third Culture Kids' Identity Development in School:** Ensure the school is adequately addressing the needs of 'third culture kids', particularly before they have fully recognised their own personal and cultural identities.
- **Enhancing Students' Sense of Belonging in the UAE:** Provide support for students who feel a lack of belonging in the UAE where possible by tackling issues like Racism.
- **Further promote Cultural Appreciation and Recognition Through School Activities:** Where possible, 'cater to students' who are from minority backgrounds and ensure requirements are being met for a comprehensive appreciation and acknowledgment of their native country through various promotional activities and events held throughout the school year.

Staff survey recommendations:

- **Expand Professional Development to Enhance DEI Best Practices Awareness:** Increase professional development opportunities to raise awareness about current best practices in DEI.
- **Collaborating with External Agencies for Professional Development in DEI:** Where possible, collaborate with external agencies like Diverse Educators or Being Luminary to deliver professional development sessions for all stakeholders.

Curriculum recommendations:

- **Middle Leaders' Collaboration with Professor Betty Leask for Curriculum Internationalisation:** Middle leaders should collaborate closely with Professor Betty Leask and complete her short course next year to deepen their understanding of Internationalising the Curriculum.
- **Ensuring Implementation and Impact Measurement of Curriculum Internationalisation:** After completing the course, middle leaders should ensure implementation within their departments or year groups by conducting follow-up audits to measure the impact.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been a very eventful and busy year at GEMS Metropole School. This report has highlighted many issues that we as a community must address collectively if we are to move forward positively in trying to "Create a sense of Belonging for all." It is important to remember that merely raising awareness of these issues does not necessarily mean the issues or problems will go away. As educators, it is our duty to ensure our students, from their start in the Forest School through to their graduation from the Future School, are well-prepared to be part of a globalized society, regardless of how it may evolve. By acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills, our students will be equipped to thrive and prosper in their future endeavours. We must also ensure that all stakeholders, including staff, parents, and the wider community, fully understand the complexities and nuances of the concerns and issues highlighted. By addressing these together, we can learn from them and embrace the diverse cultures and ethnicities that we are fortunate to have here in the UAE.

Moreover, it is worth noting that universities across the globe are already examining their systems and processes to ensure students have representation and a seamless transition into various schools on their campuses. They recognise that learning should not be limited to merely obeying and reproducing established philosophical traditions without challenge. The learning environment of the future must be designed to promote critical thinking, encouraging students to question, innovate, and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in diverse and meaningful ways. By fostering such an environment, we can better prepare our students for the complexities and opportunities of the modern world. (Giladi, P. 2024).



Ethical considerations

The research presented in this report was conducted independently within the school context, with the primary aim was to examine our school from an outsider's perspective through a DEI lens, aiming to understand the viewpoints of all stakeholders regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion. Recognising the sensitive nature of this topic and the fact that the DEEI lead is a staff member at GEMS Metropole School, the utmost care was taken to ensure confidentiality and integrity throughout the research and report writing process.

To uphold ethical standards, several measures were implemented:

1. **Confidentiality:** All data collected was handled with the highest level of confidentiality. The identities of participants were protected, and no personally identifiable information was recorded or disclosed at any stage of the research.
2. **Anonymity:** Survey participants were ensured complete anonymity. Responses were collected in a manner that did not link any data to individual participants, thereby protecting their privacy and psychological safety.
3. **Voluntary Participation:** Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the survey and research and their right to choose whether to participate or not.

By adhering to these ethical principles and respecting the UAE laws and code of conduct, this research aims to contribute valuable insights to the DEI initiatives within the school while respecting and protecting the rights and privacy of all participants involved.



Glossary

A glossary of key terms relating to ethnicity is provided below.

Asian ethnic group. Individuals identified as belonging to one of the following ethnic groups: Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; any other Asian background.

Black ethnic group. Individuals identified as from a Caribbean, African or any other Black background.

Mixed ethnic background. Individuals identified as: White and Black Caribbean; White and Black African; White and Asian; any other mixed or multiple ethnic background.

White ethnic background. Individuals identified as from the following ethnic backgrounds: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British; Irish; Gypsy or Irish Traveller; Roma; any other White background.

Other ethnic background. Individuals identified as Arab or any other ethnic group.

Ethnic minority: all ethnic groups in England except the White British group. Ethnic minorities include White minorities, such as Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller groups.

Source: [Writing about ethnicity - GOV.UK \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk)

BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic is used in the literature to refer to ethnic groups in England other than White British. This definition commonly includes Irish and other White minorities.

BME: Black and Minority Ethnic is used in the literature to refer to ethnic groups in England other than White British. This definition commonly includes Irish and other White minorities.

People of colour is an umbrella term referring to anyone who is not/does not identify as White. Source: <https://www.theantiracisteducator.com/person-of-colour>

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Source: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/secondary-education-resources/useful-information/understanding-equality>

Equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's (racial or ethnic) identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them. Source: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Ethnicity is a social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioural patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base. Source: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Disparity means a lack of equality or similarity, especially in a way that is not fair. Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/disparity>

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognises everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. Source: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Inclusion is the practice of including people in a way that is fair for all, values everyone's differences, and empowers and enables each person to be themselves and achieve their full potential and thrive at work. Source: <https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/factsheets/diversity-factsheet/#Whatis>

Progression as used in this report means that people at one stage of the teaching profession move to the next stage within the profession (e.g. an applicant to ITT is accepted onto a course, a newly qualified teacher enters teaching, or a senior leader is promoted to headship).

Race: Race is an invented social construct, and not a biological fact. As defined in the Equality Act (2010), race can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as your current nationality. Sources: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/race-discrimination>

Representation means the percentage of people from a given ethnic group compared with the proportion of the same ethnic group in the population of England as a whole. Groups are over-represented if their percentage in the teacher workforce is significantly greater than in the wider population and under-represented if their percentage in the teacher workforce is significantly lower. Source: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/racial-equality>

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