

## Building Futures: Believing in children

### Black Children's Achievement in the Early Years

The terms Black child or children are used to refer to children with at least one Black parent, grandparent or great grandparent who was born in Africa, the Caribbean or Guyana in South America.

The guidance aims to encourage practitioners to give due regard to the specific backgrounds and circumstances of all children, thereby improving the quality of their experience. It means seeing every child as unique, part of a unique family and home experience: there may be patterns and commonalities relating to culture but every family is different.

National Foundation Stage data collected between 2004-2007 suggested that too many Black African and Black Caribbean children were doing less well than many peers from other ethnic groups across all areas of learning. Black children are not less able than other children but too few excel within our education system and too many fall too far behind their peers; a disproportionate number of Black children are underachieving.

*Black Children GLD Solihull 2017-61% & Solihull 2018-70.3%    National 2017- 70% & National 2018-69%  
LA RANK Solihull 2017-107<sup>th</sup> and 2018-51<sup>st</sup>*

#### **Case study**

Keysia was the only Black girl in her Reception class. Her Pupil attitude and self-esteem survey revealed that she did not like going to school. The teacher met with her mother to try and identify the problems. Keysia said that she didn't like not being like the other girls. This prompted her mother to tell the class teacher about a bath-time incident when Keysia had been scrubbing ferociously at her skin on her hands saying she was trying to wash the black off. Keysia's mother remembered that she had exactly the same feelings as a young girl. The school started to work with the mother to find ways to improve Keysia's self-esteem and to make school a happier place for her:

- Keysia's mother began to help in school which offered a positive role model and made her feel special
- Keysia's mother involved her more in skin-care and hair-care discussions
- Activities and lessons were made more relevant to Black children and PSED concentrated on celebrating differences and encouraging children to see what was good about themselves
- Displays and images around school featured more Black people
- Staff attended an 'Introduction to Black Studies' course and applied their learning

*What mechanisms do you have in place for listening to children and tuning in to what they are feeling?*

The learning environment should be a place where children feel confident, so that they are willing to try things out. Seeing themselves and things familiar to them will help them to feel confident and secure. Within the learning environment it is important to ensure that materials reflect and acknowledge diversity, and that stereotypical images and approaches are avoided.

For a young child to feel acknowledged, the parent needs to feel acknowledged too.

*What are your priorities, as an individual or a setting, for professional development in working with parents?*

*How does the learning environment 'speak' to Black children and families?*

*Does the provision meet the needs of all children as both a place to feel at home and a place to learn?*

#### **Case study**

Staff at a nursery noted a reluctance, particularly amongst Black and Asian boys, towards mark making. When Jay, a boy of Black Caribbean heritage was asked to write his name on his painting he replied 'No, I don't want to, but can I make a compost heap?'

The boys showed high levels of involvement outdoors so, through consultation with the boys, staff further resourced the outdoor area to offer motivating mark-making opportunities, including a garden jobs diary and making garden signs.

*How do you involve children in making decisions about their learning?*

*Do you react differently to some children's non-compliant behaviour?*