

Appendix 2

Summary of A Mid-term evaluation of Lewisham Schools Tackling Race Inequality in Education 'Difficult things require a lot of effort.'

Michael Keating June 2022

The Report

Based predominately on a series of interviews with a range of the key local players this report provides a mid-term evaluation of Tackling Race Inequality in Education. Crucially it is the needs of the children and young people and their families that sit at the heart of this work – for their individual and collective benefit and the present and future of Lewisham.

Introduction

- 1.1 The vision set out for 'Tackling Race Inequality in Education' (TRIIE) is an ambitious one, articulating as it does that 'we need to lead the way and be in the vanguard of driving change.' To test how this is measuring up with practice a mid-term evaluation was commissioned to reflect on the progress of the key areas of focus and priority actions on curriculum, relationships, parents and the community and leadership. The aim of the evaluation has been to understand and agree:
 - What's been happening?
 - What's been working and what hasn't? Why?
 - What should the next steps be for the second half of the project?
- 1.2 To achieve this a series of one-to-one interviews, and attendance at the May Steering Group meeting, was undertaken with members of the Steering Group, local authority officers and a parent as well as a group discussion with the Lewisham Education Group.
- 1.3 Within the limits of this evaluation there is a richness of information and views which hopefully allow the Steering Group to build on their work to date.
- 1.4 It should not be forgotten that the TRIIE work has been initiated and developed over the last two years of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns causing major disruption to schools, their pupils and the wider community. During this time a substantial amount of interactions have taken place via Zoom and Teams enabling business to carry on but do lack the subtleties of face-to-face interactions which could enhance some of the sensitive debates that are at the heart of TRIIE.
- 1.5 The evaluation is structured on five key themes:
 - Understanding Lewisham the place and its people
 - Building on the opportunity of TRIIE
 - Leveraging the leadership of the local authority
 - Strengthening trust and relationships
 - Bringing it together
- 1.6 These themes are explored in more depth in the body of the report, but the following conclusions are offered:
 - The Pledge signed by 100% of schools provides a strong foundation and should not be underestimated as both an important symbol and a spur to action.

- The understanding and debates about equality and race at the heart of TRIIE are difficult shaped as they are by community and personal 4 experiences (both bad and good) but the Steering Group should not be afraid of exploring their complexity.
- The Steering Group is Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic led and this is itself an important symbol and spur to new ways of working and thinking.
- It feels too early to make grand claims about the impact, but enough work has already taken place or is planned to allow greater clarity over the coming year.
- This will require further reflection by the Steering Group about how it operates, the measures it wishes to use and the outcomes desired.
- Even in a difficult national policy and service context for local government, the local authority has a key role
- There is (always) more to do in strengthening trust and relationships – among the Steering Group itself, with all Heads and schools, the breadth of local authority services and the community itself – and continually teasing out the tensions is vital.
- While ‘education’ and ‘race’ are the starting points these are not discrete entities (either conceptually or practically) so seeking to make the right connections with ideas, policies, organisations and people both within and outside Lewisham can only enhance the work.
- The needs of Black children and young people are at the heart of TRIIE but getting the policy and delivery of this work right (and indeed being honest about what might go wrong) must benefit the needs of children and young people from all backgrounds in the borough.

In May 2022 a report from the Centre for Labour and Social Studies, The UK Race Class Narrative¹, captured the values and experiences of diverse working class people up and down the country to develop a new narrative that builds solidarity across race and class for progressive change. It outlines a core structure for doing this as follows which echoes the TRIIE model:

- Start with a shared value that explicitly includes people across lines of race and class (or residence, profession and commitment) to build solidarity. 1 <http://classonline.org.uk/pubs/item/the-uk-race-class-narrative-report-14>
- Narrate the problem and locate this in the roles and actions of individuals and organisations.
- Emphasise how collective action helps address the problem and implement the solutions that will benefit all.
- Communicate an aspirational vision, being specific about the outcomes that can be achieved by joining together.

7.2 There are questions still unanswered about when and how the impact will be evident but these remain up for debate and all the actors are still working out how to do this. Although TRIIE may not yet have completed its journey (which may well be a long one) the foundations are there to reach the positive change the Pledge and related work aspire towards.

8. Personal endnote

8.1 Travelling home after undertaking some interviews in the borough, I read a review of a new biography of the poet, John Donne, and thought the following excerpt captured an essence of what TRIIE could and should be about. It may be an odd connection, but I offer it as final note (of inspiration): It’s a place in which connections are everywhere, in which the material stuff of the world is always ‘speaking’ and pointing and cross referencing. In a world like this, you can take enormous risks in playing with concepts and images, because of a confidence that things join up

sooner or later; you can launch from a trapeze, knowing that someone or something else's trajectory will bring them to a place where they can catch you.

Rowan Williams, *The New Statesman*, 13-19 May 2022