

Paper 17: Concepts across the curriculum

This paper

This paper outlines six sets of concepts relevant to race equality and cultural diversity. They can permeate every subject in the National Curriculum, at all key stages.

1. Shared humanity: similarity, sameness and universality

Teaching about difference and diversity must go hand in hand with teaching about commonality and sameness. Art, drama, history, music, novels, poetry, religion and stories all explore humankind's basic humanity.

In science, pupils learn about aspects of human biology that are universal, about universals in the inorganic world and about science as a universal human activity.

Universals in biology are also encountered in health education and PE.

In geography, pupils learn about recurring patterns in relationships between human beings and their physical environment.

2. Difference and diversity: contrasting stories and interpretations

In all subjects, the texts, visual material and electronic resources can reflect the reality that Britain is a multi-ethnic society and is part of an interdependent world.

Similarly the tasks, problems and assignments that are set can reflect these aspects of the real world.

In many subjects, in addition, there are direct opportunities for teaching and learning about cultural differences, and differences of perception, interpretation and narrative.

3. Interdependence: borrowing, mingling and mutual influence

A recurring danger in teaching and learning about cultures is that pupils will get the idea that each culture is distinct from all others. The reality is that boundaries between cultures are porous and frequently unclear.

Interdependence is an essential concept in geography, biology, chemistry and physics, and in all studies of causation in history.

Examples of mutual influence and fusion can be found in art, design, drama, literature, music and technology.

4. Excellence everywhere

Excellence is to be found in all cultures, societies and traditions, not in 'the west' only.

The 'default position' in the curriculum, however, can all too often be the assumption that all significant human achievements arose in the West – this is what is communicated, even though teachers do not consciously intend it.

In every subject, examples of achievement, invention, creativity, insight and heroism should be taken from a wide range of cultures, both in the present and in the past.

5. Identity and belonging

Every individual belongs to a range of different groups, and therefore has a range of different loyalties and affiliations. Also, and partly in consequence, all individuals change and develop. Pupils need to know and feel confident in their own identity but also to be open to change and development, and to be able to engage positively with other identities.

All pupils need to be comfortable with the concept of multiple identity and with hyphenated terms such as Black-British, British-Muslim and English-British.

A sense of belonging to Britain and that 'Britain belongs to me' may be developed in all arts and humanities subjects, in citizenship education and PSHE, and can be implicit in some of the examples, reference points and case studies in mathematics, science and technology.

6. Race, ethnicity and justice

Already at Key Stage 1 pupils need to appreciate that there is a single race, the human race, but that the world contains ignorance, prejudice, discrimination and injustice.

In the course of their time at school pupils should become familiar with theories about the sources and forms of racism, including individual racism and institutional racism.

They need also to know about strategies, actions and campaigns to prevent and address racism, locally, nationally and internationally; equal opportunities in employment and the provision of services; the role of legislation; the management and resolution of conflict; intercultural communication and relationships; and justice and fairness. Not least, they need to know what they themselves can do to address racism within their own sphere of influence.

It is particularly in history, PSHE and citizenship education that social and political concepts to do with race and racism are taught and developed directly. Indirectly, they can be a dimension in all subjects, particularly literature and stories, and the creative and performing arts.

Source: *Aiming High: understanding the needs of minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools*, Department for Education and Skills.