

February 2001

Consultation on Guidance for schools on ethnic monitoring Ref 0311/2000

NALDIC (National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum) broadly welcomes the proposals contained in the above guidance which are largely in line with current best practice in LEAs and have been informed by discussions with the Commission for Racial Equality. We would however wish the DfEE to take into consideration a number of points, particularly with regard to the relationship between ethnicity and language.

The introduction to the draft guidance outlines specific benefits of the collection and recording of pupils' ethnicity namely

- *better information at school level, locally and nationally on the attainment of pupils from different ethnic groups, which can help identify barriers to achievement and inform strategies to raise standards*
- *more effective targeting of funding through the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant*
- *cutting out the need for schools to contribute to separate piecemeal ethnic monitoring surveys*

Collecting data simultaneously on the linguistic heritage of pupils would reinforce and strengthen these benefits as well as signalling respect for pupils and their families and fostering pride in their heritage and abilities. Extensive research into the achievement of pupils, including the most recent Youth Cohort Study, has highlighted the significance of EAL as a factor in the achievement of minority ethnic pupils and collecting linguistic information during this exercise would significantly improve the identification of barriers to achievement, inform strategies to raise standards, improve targeting of additional funding and remove the need for piecemeal surveys. The specimen proforma should therefore include an additional question relating to the linguistic background of pupils. This would clearly signal respect for linguistic diversity, ensure that the proforma was an effective medium for collecting information relating to ethnic, linguistic and cultural background, and provide LEAs and schools with essential information for forward planning through a single data collection exercise. We would argue that linguistic heritage and EAL is an essential data set within the 'pupils level Annual Schools' Census' and should therefore be included in this exercise and similarly comply with the Data Protection Act.

In addition, the proforma should also request information relating to religion, again to reinforce recognition of interrelated and important elements of ethnic and cultural identity. Care should be taken that ethnic backgrounds are presented alphabetically, rather than commencing with 'White', which may inappropriately give the impression that this is the norm from which all other heritage groups differ. We would find the use of 'heritage' or 'background' rather than 'group' throughout the document more acceptable and more readily understood and accepted by those who will be completing the proforma.

It is obviously essential that the letter is translated into languages other than English. In our opinion this would be most effective if the standard letter and proforma were available in a downloadable format on the website. Not only would this save LEAs and schools which routinely translate documents considerable sums of money and time, but would also facilitate the adoption of best practice in information gathering by LEAs and schools in which appropriate response to a linguistically diverse population is not yet embedded. It should be noted that the translations provided should be comprehensive and also available on tape to ensure the fullest participation.

As a final point, in the situation where no response to the request for information has been received, the CRE has endorsed the subscription of an ethnic heritage by the school, **'by a member of staff who knows the pupil best (probably their class or form teacher)**. we

feel that this would usefully be amended to read **‘by a member of staff who knows the pupil best (probably their class, form or EMAG teacher) and is fully informed regarding issues of ethnic, linguistic and cultural heritage.** We feel that EMAG funded staff are often in a position of strength regarding knowledge of individual pupils as well as fully understanding the complexities of ethnic and cultural heritage.

We hope that you find these observations useful to the process of refining this important guidance and look forward to seeing them incorporated within the revised document.

Helen Abji
Chair of NALDIC