



hemisphere
EDUCATION

What Works? Case Studies from Hemisphere Partner Schools

In partnership with the Greenwich Learning Partnership

June 2026

rare

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Impact	5
Case Studies	6
Summary of key lessons	6
Pound Park Nursery School: Fostering a sense of belonging for students, families and staff	7
Horn Park Primary School: Reducing racist language incidents through curiosity and education	11
Willow Dene School: Creating The Name Charter	15
St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive School: Piloting the phonetic register	19
Eltham Hill School: Using intergenerational conversations to support Black girls	22
Conclusion	26
About the author	27

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce 'What Works? Case Studies from Hemisphere Partner Schools.'



This report celebrates our collaborative work across our partnership of schools with Hemisphere, as we support all school staff in developing their understanding of racial literacy. The programme has given us strong foundations; it offers a common, strong framework that empowers every adult working in our schools to think deeply about the lives of the students they serve. It is fantastic to see these case studies, which highlight exactly how our schools have built on this training to meaningfully shape their daily practices.

The case studies show the incredible depth of thinking prompted by the Hemisphere project. They describe transformative practices that strengthen our communities and make sure that everyone feels genuinely welcome in our schools. As school leaders, we know that a sense of belonging is essential to enabling children to thrive both socially and academically. The direct impact on children's lives is clear throughout these pages.

This project has also strengthened our partnership work across Greenwich. Leaders have collaborated to build a shared understanding - learning with each other and from each other. I would like to thank the leaders from the five schools featured in this report for so openly sharing their experiences.

We all look forward to continuing these vital conversations and making sure the Hemisphere project has a lasting, positive impact on our schools and their wider communities.

Steve Harris

Director

Greenwich Learning Partnership



Introduction

Hemisphere Education was launched in 2022 to combat bias and change outcomes in schools. Drawing on 20 years of expertise in inclusion, the neuroscience-informed digital training platform helps schools strengthen safeguarding, close outcome gaps and develop high quality inclusive practices.

Blending government data, original research, animations and interactive exercises, Hemisphere provides school staff and students with an opportunity to learn about inclusion in a way that feels safe and non-judgemental.

Each Hemisphere module explores the specific experiences that can affect belonging for children from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, with practical, customisable actions schools can put into practice straight away.

To date, modules have covered the experiences of Black, South Asian and Chinese students. Work is underway to develop modules on the experiences of White working class, Jewish and Muslim students.

Hemisphere is not a one-off training event. When schools sign up to Hemisphere they are committing to taking a whole school approach to belonging. This is supported by the Hemisphere modules revisiting core themes each year, ensuring learning remains relevant and cumulative. Schools also have access to a resource library to support the development of racial literacy, and support from the Hemisphere Education team as they plan the roll out of each new module.

Hemisphere's evolution as a training platform has involved close collaboration with its partner schools, many of which have contributed to the ideation and iteration of its modules. In 2024, Hemisphere entered into its first partnership with a group of schools, the Greenwich Learning Partnership. Together, we have developed an approach that has achieved high levels of engagement across the borough, supported consistent, high-quality practice and created opportunities for schools to learn from one another. The success of this partnership approach has led to similar collaborations between Hemisphere and other education partnerships.

Sharing examples of what has worked well in schools, and why, is an important part of Hemisphere Education's mission. This report showcases the experiences of five Greenwich Learning Partnership schools as they took a whole school approach to Hemisphere, developing new interventions, and starting conversations that have changed cultures and improved sense of belonging for students, staff and families.

Impact

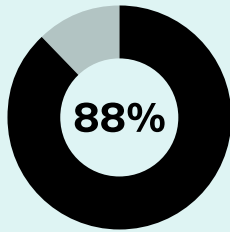
Hemisphere Education has significant reach

400
schools

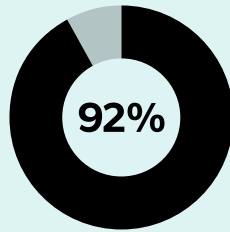
50,000
users trained

60,000
training sessions
completed

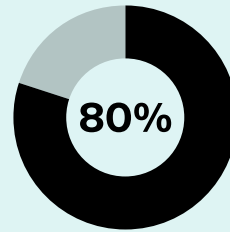
Staff and students are positively impacted by the training



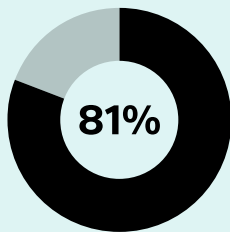
of staff say Hemisphere covered topics and issues not covered by other CPD



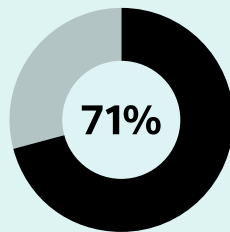
of staff say they have a better understanding of their students



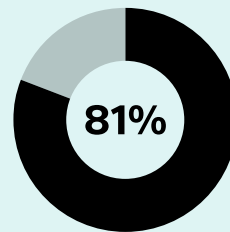
of students say they feel more confident to talk about race and racism



of staff and students say they are likely to do things differently



of staff and students report having made changes within 12 months



of staff and students would recommend Hemisphere to a colleague or classmate

The top UK wide Hemisphere Education Actions in 2024-2025 were:

- 1 Be racially literate.
- 2 Get names right.
- 3 Check your language.
- 4 Talk about race and racism.
- 5 Create an inclusive learning environment.

Case Studies

Summary of key lessons

The five case studies included in this report cover the experiences of nursery, primary and secondary schools as they responded to their first year of Hemisphere Education training in 2024. A number of key lessons emerge, which can be summarised in the following way.

1 Hemisphere is not a one-off training event



The schools profiled in this report all realised that simply completing the online Hemisphere training and setting individual action plans would not alone achieve their goals. By putting in regular CPD sessions focused on the school's top Hemisphere Actions – referred to as a 'drip drip' approach by one Deputy Head – the schools have been able to keep the work on the agenda for all staff.

2 Staff conversations are essential



Before it is possible to put in place new activities to improve inclusion and belonging, it is necessary to ensure all staff have bought into the ethos and mission of Hemisphere. The case studies in this report reveal the benefits of introducing Hemisphere to staff through conversations about their own experiences, fears and expectations, whilst also providing data and evidence to illustrate the importance and relevance of the work.

3 Focusing on a single action is a good way to get started



It can feel overwhelming when we think we have to solve all inclusion challenges at once. The experiences profiled in this report demonstrate that it is possible to make significant changes to a school's culture through focusing on one specific Hemisphere Action. For example, schools that have focused on 'Getting Names Right' have seen improved staff-student relationships, positive student feedback and increased staff confidence in relation to conversations about race.

4 Small pilot programmes can grow into whole school approaches



It isn't necessary to roll out a new intervention to the entire school population immediately. Some of the case studies in this report highlight the power of piloting or trialing a new idea at a small scale, reviewing the results and then expanding the reach of the intervention the following term or academic year. Testing and iterating ideas with specific classes, year groups or members of staff can be a great way to find out what works before committing to a whole school roll out.

5 Improving inclusion and belonging is a process



The work of ensuring all students, staff and families have a sense of belonging at school is an ongoing process. The case studies in this report include both the celebration of successful interventions as well as reflections on what could be done differently and what can be done next. Inclusion work is not something that schools 'complete' – it is something that evolves alongside the needs of changing school communities.

Pound Park Nursery School: Fostering a sense of belonging for students, families and staff

This case study focuses on the work Pound Park Nursery School has done to foster a sense of belonging for its students, parents and staff members. This work has been led by Solin Flash, Headteacher, and Harriet Woodcock, Co-Lead for Inclusion.



Throughout her career, Solin had observed the way that biases could result in staff assuming that global majority children would not meet their early learning goals. As part of 2020's renewed discussions about racism and inclusion, Solin raised her concerns at the local authority level and subsequently became a founding member of Educate Against Racism in Greenwich. It was as a part of this group that she first encountered Hemisphere and started the conversations that resulted in the training being adopted throughout the borough.

For its first year of Hemisphere, Pound Park rolled out to all staff in the setting and then later to school governors. The Hemisphere Action to create a sense of belonging for all students and families resonated most with the team, striking them as an important improvement that complemented their existing strengths. Harriet shares: "Staff already put so much into knowing where these families and children are coming from. It didn't seem out of the realms of possibility that we could deepen that knowledge and make it really, really meaningful in terms of cultural background and religion".

Helicopter Stories

At the time, the teachers were taking part in a research project led by Greenwich University to make changes in schools. This project was spearheaded by Solin and a fellow headteacher after they were motivated by a speaker discussing children's belonging and cultural identity. There was an opportunity to combine this work with Pound Park's mission to improve the sense of belonging of its global majority students and families. The team therefore designed an intervention based on the Helicopter Stories approach, which involved teachers asking children to share a story, writing it down verbatim, and then asking the group of children to act the story out.

The team decided to evolve the Helicopter Stories approach by asking families of global majority heritage to contribute personal stories to be shared in the classroom. They understood the importance of treating this as an exchange, with vulnerability on both sides. To reflect this, the team wrote to the parents outlining the aim of the project. The letter included three example stories from members of staff, including a story about Ugandan family parties.

"The stories we got were lovely", Harriet says, reflecting on the positive response they received. The responses opened a window into the diverse lives of Pound Park's students, including stories of travels to Jamaica to visit family, Christmas dinners and food traditions. Some families also sent in photos to help bring the stories to life. The team shared the stories in group time and then

asked the children to tell a story themselves. The aim was to see if sharing a family story resulted in children feeling empowered to share a story about themselves. The results were measured by comparing the students' responses to a sample story with their responses to a family story.

The impact on children

The initial results were striking. A number of children who had initially told commonly known stories - such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' - decided to share their own stories after hearing a family story. One child, who had not wanted to take part in the story telling initially, shouted out "That's my story!" when he recognised the story his parents had sent in being told. He didn't yet have the confidence to act out his own story, but he was excited for his classmates to act it out.



This demonstrates the value of children of all backgrounds seeing themselves represented in curriculum content. When children realise their personal experiences matter too, they are more likely to feel comfortable and confident to share what they know in a classroom setting. Solin highlights the importance of this for the children: "They know that it's their parents that have sent in this story, which is so empowering for them to sit there and everyone else to listen about my mum or my dad and my auntie". To ensure all students benefit, the team at Pound Park has decided to include the family stories exercise in the curriculum throughout the year.

Creating an inclusive community

The Helicopter Stories intervention sat alongside other changes Pound Park made to improve sense of belonging for global majority children. For example, the team updated its approach to onboarding home visits to include questions focused on inclusion, such as the phonetic spelling of children's names, the family's favourite meals and the genres of music listened to at home.

Solin shares that this information is used to make the role play areas inclusive: "We are not only going to get out East Asian utensils when it's Lunar New Year, but also think about what do meal times look like for families at home. Do we sit on the floor? Do we sit at a low tables? Do we eat with our hands? For example. It's about acknowledging all of those small things. Also, thinking about our hair and the products used to make it stay curly - it's having those things available. If we're representing a home, let's have all the different things that may be in different people's homes". Harriet adds that the nursery

school has curated a playlist of families' favourite songs: "We have speakers out in our garden on Monday and Friday. We've started making playlists of all the music that children might hear at home. It's a rolling list of different genres of what children hear - it's like drum and bass and then Latin music next".

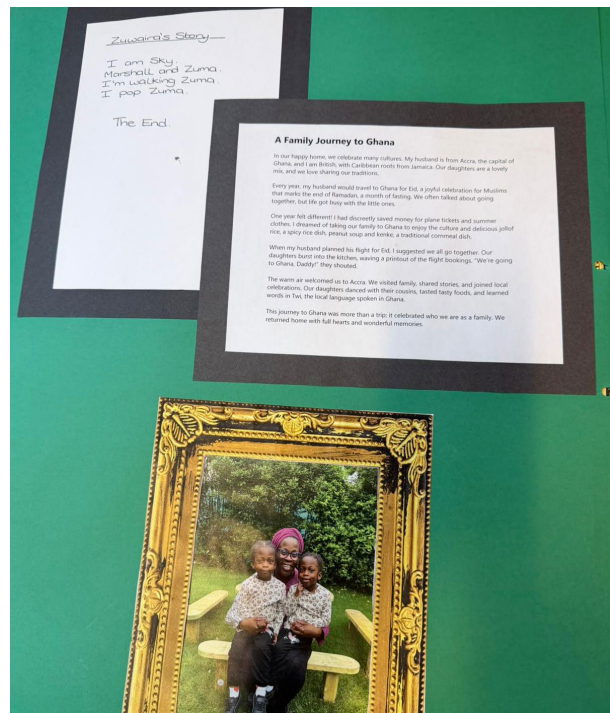
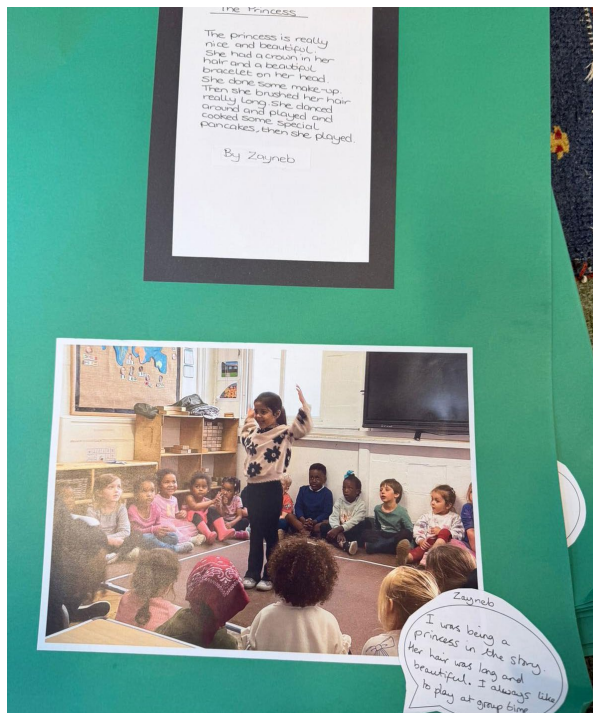
Getting staff buy-in

Reflecting on the challenges faced when implementing Pound Park's Hemisphere Actions, Solin and Harriet highlight that it was important to move from a focused project led by specific team members to regular activities for all staff. "It felt like we've done our training, we've got this project, but actually not everyone is fully involved in it. I think that was a challenge," says Harriet. For the second year of Hemisphere, as well as embedding the stories project into the curriculum, Pound Park has introduced Hemisphere related CPD sessions for staff at least once each half term.

The regular Hemisphere sessions were based on the Hemisphere Actions most popular with staff. One of the sessions was a cultural bingo game, which Harriet shares was a positive way to include staff of all backgrounds in conversations about race and inclusion: "One of the bingo items was 'teaches children from diverse backgrounds'. We all do because that's our job. I think it's important, especially when you have a majority White staff, which we do. That's the way to get people to buy into it, to say 'this is about you'. It's very easy as a White British person in Britain to be like, this is not about me, but actually it is. If you are a White person in charge of inclusion or co-leading on inclusion you have to go into that knowing not everyone is going to have that buy-in straight away. How are you going to lead them to it gently with fun and humour, but also with determination?"

The impact on staff

The half termly Hemisphere sessions also include case study sessions, where staff discuss a scenario related to race and inclusion. Scenarios have included how staff might respond to children making racist comments, or staff regularly getting the names of their colleagues wrong. Harriet highlights



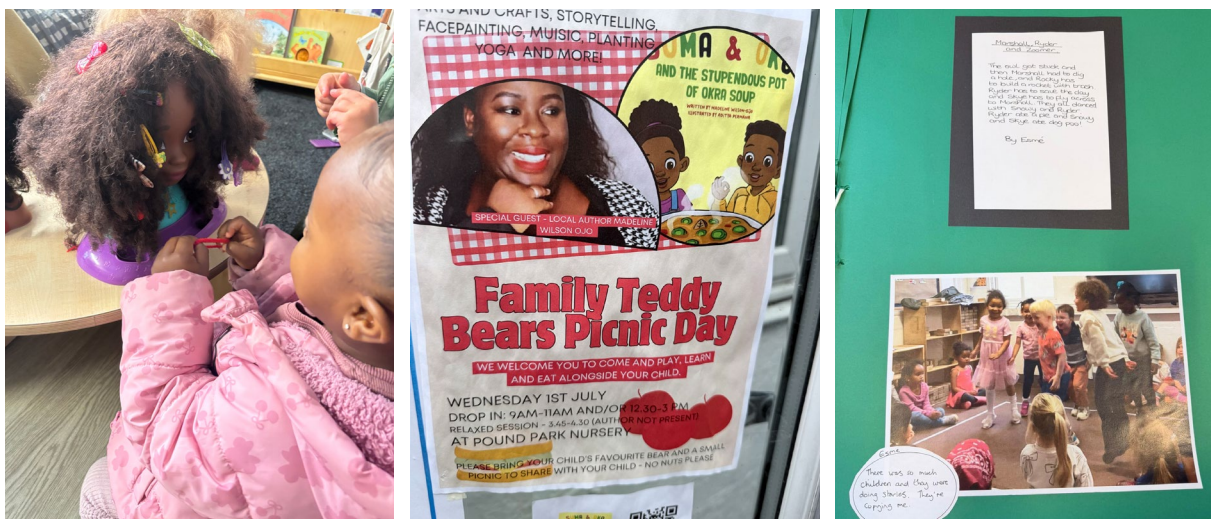
that this has helped staff to understand racism at school as a safeguarding issue: “We just needed to talk about it organically and staff were brilliant with that. And some of the conversation included staff saying: ‘Oh, we would need to record that. That is a safeguarding issue.’” Pound Park uses its safeguarding reporting tool to record race related incidents, however small. Solin and Harriet have also noticed that more staff are gaining the confidence to deal with race related incidents in the moment.

Solin shares that the case study sessions have enabled staff to have regular conversations where they consider how things might be done differently: “It was good because what it also did was allow staff to reflect, ‘I’ve experienced this in my career and this is what we did, and now I reflect on it, was that the correct action that was taken?’. I’m so happy that staff are so engaged in this and it’s become the norm here for us to have these conversations”.

An improvement in staff’s understanding of how different children and families celebrate religious festivals is a good example of the impact of Pound Park’s work on its Hemisphere Actions. Solin shares that whereas staff used to make the assumption that all South Asian children celebrated Eid, the recent conversations sparked by Hemisphere have led to open conversations resulting in staff better understanding and supporting the school’s children. Harriet agrees, sharing that staff felt comfortable to ask questions about Eid that they would have been worried to ask in the past: “I think people feel empowered to say something that before they might have thought a stupid question or been embarrassed to not know.”

Solin also shares that the conversations have resulted in members of staff feeling more able to be their authentic selves at work, highlighting that staff can also benefit when schools work to improve the sense of belonging of their students and families. Following the sessions, some staff members have felt comfortable to share that they are practicing Muslims, says Solin: “I’ve also noticed people that may not have previously said, say ‘I am also a Muslim. I may not wear the hijab or look like a stereotypical Muslim, but that is my faith’”.

Reflecting on Pound Park’s Hemisphere journey, Harriet sums up the experience as one of engaging with hard truths in a way that makes staff feel empowered to make change in their immediate environment: “The Hemisphere training is brilliant in that it delivers some quite hard truths, but in a way that makes you feel impassioned rather than despairing. I wanted to carry that on. Some facts are hard to hear, but this nursery is our small little world where we can change it. We can’t change the whole society, alas, but we can change what happens here”.



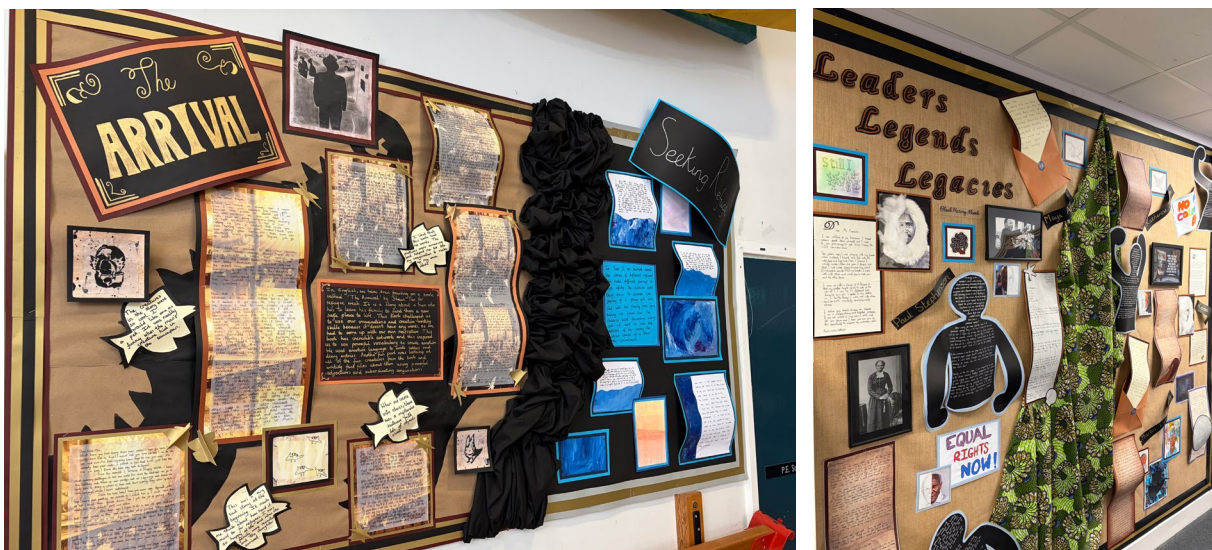
A selection of photos from Pound Park Nursery School capturing examples of Helicopter Stories and inclusive role play areas.

Horn Park Primary School: Reducing racist language incidents through curiosity and education



This case study focuses on how Horn Park Primary School has reduced incidents involving racist language by 68% by switching from a zero-tolerance approach to blending clear consequences with education and support. This work has been led by Jack Green, Headteacher.

Horn Park Primary School teaches its students about belonging and inclusion through a series of annual whole school projects. One of these projects is for Black History Month in October, and another is for Refugee Week in June. During these celebrations, the school puts up related displays, and each classroom completes activities linked to the celebration. In addition, the school has reviewed the texts it uses to ensure authors from a range of backgrounds are included. Students also complete a PSHE curriculum in Key Stage 2 including sessions on racism, bias, prejudice and discrimination. This runs alongside a programme called 'No Outsiders' which is used both in class and in whole school assemblies.



Photos of the displays celebrating Refugee Week and Black History Month at Horn Park.

Responding to racist language

Despite this proactive approach to inclusion, the school saw a rise in incidents involving Key Stage 2 children using racist language in 2022, suggesting the need for a tailored response to this specific issue. Around the same time, the school's leadership team were completing an Inclusive Leadership course which introduced them to Hemisphere. This prompted the team to question their existing

approach, asking: “How do we make sure that people’s experiences are heard? And how are we ensuring appropriate follow up so that we don’t get repeated incidents of language being used whilst also making sure that children feel supported on both sides of it?”.

The leadership team’s reflections revealed inconsistencies when it came to the consequences for children who used racist language and how families were communicated with about the incidents. Jack says this led to detailed conversations about the intended outcomes of each step in the school’s handling of such incidents: “We had quite a lot of really honest, but quite challenging conversations around why specific consequences were being used. If we were talking about suspension, what was the impact of that? What is our follow-up for the victim and the perpetrator and then families? This meant that we needed to embed consistent language and a consistent approach to the follow up”.

From ‘zero tolerance’ to ‘education and support’

Horn Park’s initial response to the increase in racist language focused on demonstrating that the incidents were being taken ‘incredibly seriously’, which resulted in the use of external exclusions. However, using data to evaluate the impact of this approach revealed that it was not having the desired long-term effects. Jack recalls: “It wasn’t having the impact on changing behaviours because there were instances of repeat behaviours. That led to a lot of reflection, with us asking: “Is this way of approaching the consequence the right way? And are we working with children enough? Are we working with families enough when these things happen?”.

The design of a new approach started with staff conversations about past incidents to understand what was driving the use of racist language. Staff identified that children had often heard the language online, on social media or being used by family members. Their key realisation was that whilst the children clearly knew it was hurtful and inappropriate language, they often did not understand why. Jack shares that this pointed to the need for the school to educate the children specifically about racist language and its impact: “We use language like prejudice and discrimination. We did feel it was really important to use that language so they started to understand the impact of it. And especially where specific phrases or words were used, we thought it was important to name it, to talk about the impact and a bit of history behind language as well”.

As a result, children at Horn Park who use racist language at school no longer receive an immediate external suspension. They now instead receive an internal suspension during which they learn about racism and its impact. A focus on consistency has also been built into this new approach, with the process being clearly laid out for staff and families as follows:

- A child uses racist language at school;
- The child who used the language is immediately separated from the child who was the victim of the racist language;
- A senior leader is immediately informed of the incident;
- Parents/guardians are invited in for a meeting, informed of the incident and shown what their child will learn as part of the internal suspension;
- The child completes learning about racism and its impact as part of the internal suspension;
- Parents/guardians come in for a meeting at the end of the internal suspension to see what their child has learnt;

- Parents/guardians take home some learning materials on race and racism for the family to complete together;
- Before the child is reintroduced to school, parents/guardians come in for a meeting to speak about how things went at home with the learning materials, and what the plan is for the future.

The impact

Jack shares that over time, the school has developed resources to support this process, and staff have grown comfortable with making adaptations for particular children and circumstances: “There’s a really high quality set of resources to use, and then we consider how do we adapt it based on the circumstance, the child, the context – so working in a more fluid way.” The approach has had demonstrable impact, with the number of incidents involving racist language falling from 19 in 2023-24 to just 6 in 2024-25 – a fall of 68%. In addition to the statistics, Jack reflects that benefits have also been seen “in terms of the confidence that children have to speak about race and to not be bystanders”.

Working with families

Securing such a positive outcome required the team at Horn Park to overcome a number of challenges. The first was the pushback they received from families who objected to the internal suspension because they thought their child did not ‘intend to cause harm’ and was at risk of being labelled. Jack shares that the school has agreed on precise language to use when communicating with families about such incidents: “It was never a case of ever labelling a child. The language used with parents was ‘Your child has used racist language and is going to need support in understanding the impact of that language. We will always take this seriously because of the impact it has on an individual. We are here to support your child as well’”.

Jack also highlights the importance of speaking with parents and guardians ahead of the internal suspension to get the school and the family on the same page: “That did lead to some really quite challenging conversations with parents. It’s why we felt that the meetings were so important and that we were aligned as school and home. We didn’t want children who had used the language to be in the meeting with school and home before there was a shared understanding between school and home of the seriousness. Although we can never control the conversation that happens at home, we can control the way we go about creating alignment in what our principles are”.

Parents and guardians of children who were victims of racist language also raised concerns when the blended approach was introduced, asking questions such as ‘Why are you not kicking them out of your school?’. The school invested time in meeting with families who had these understandable concerns, with Jack stressing the importance of careful listening: “We felt it was very important that they were heard and that we were never going to discount their view and opinion. We were always going to give them the space to raise their concerns. But we wanted to be really consistent in saying ‘we hear you, but we are taking this educational approach to it because we want to create long term change. And although it is never going to be acceptable that your child has experienced this, we feel that we are only going to get that change in behaviour long term if we take this approach’”. In addition to this messaging, the school shared data on suspensions and repeat offences to demonstrate that a zero-tolerance approach alone had not produced long term behaviour change.

This investment in conversations with families has paid off. Parents and guardians who were initially concerned about the internal suspensions have fed back that the learning materials prompted helpful and reflective conversations at home. In addition, Horn Park's recently launched parent forum on inclusion has been attended by parents and guardians of children who had previously been victims of racist language at school. Their participation demonstrates that despite their difficult experiences, enough trust has been developed for the families to continue to engage with the school community and its work on improving inclusion.

Advice and reflections

Reflecting on his advice for schools hoping to implement a similar intervention, Jack stresses the importance of providing training for staff on bias that encourages open conversations about what can be a difficult topic: "We were very eager to reduce the threat linked to the word bias because we wanted to get it across that everyone has it and it's okay to talk about it, but we are often so afraid of seeing it, that we never engage with it. We did a session for all staff on understanding bias and principles of bias informed practice, which was really, really powerful. It led to strong dialogue between members of staff across the school community about issues related to race".

Jack's closing thoughts are on the importance of replacing a zero tolerance - and often 'zero conversation' - approach with one that blends seriousness with both curiosity and behaviour change: "It has to be a blended approach of: we are not going to tolerate the behaviour, but we are going to be curious about where it's come from and we are going to be proactive in the education and support that we provide moving forward".



Willow Dene School: Creating The Name Charter



This case study focuses on how Willow Dene School designed and implemented The Name Charter to ensure the correct pronunciation of the names of students, family members and staff. This work has been led by Emma Bennett, Deputy Head, and Joshua Garret-Smith, Assistant Head Teacher.

The roll out of Hemisphere went smoothly at Willow Dene, with 97% of staff completing the training. This meant that when 'Getting Names Right' came out as the second most popular action, the leadership team took note. As the school had already done work in this area, this result confirmed staff members' desire to continue building their confidence. Emma shares that focusing on this specific action was also appealing to the leadership team: "It was a fix that was not going to be tokenistic – it was going to be throughout the school community. And it was going to have the biggest impact as far as a speedy response to the training".

Prior to the completion of Hemisphere the school had encouraged staff to use the names of parents and guardians instead of calling them generic family names such as 'mum' or 'dad'. Willow Dene had also encouraged permanent staff to work on pronouncing the names of agency staff correctly. Joshua notes that there remained room for improvement however: "We also have quite a large number of staff who don't use their actual first name and will give themselves shortened versions of their names. Children as well".

Designing The Name Charter

The leadership team started by having a series of conversations about what they had witnessed and experienced in relation to name pronunciation at school. The team then reviewed existing research and resources on names to inform the first draft of The Name Charter.

Emma shares that the creation of the charter was a collaborative and iterative process focused on providing meaningful advice and guidance: "I think it went through probably two or three iterations to make it as precise as possible. For it to be a document that was not only focused on dos and don'ts, but that also gave people permission, scripts and a really clear understanding of how they can move their practice forward in terms of getting names right, as well as highlighting the origins of names".

The Names Charter was designed to be a short and concise one-page document. It starts by outlining why names are significant and the role they play in identity and belonging. It also covers the importance of using reminders and reintroductions, reinforcing the point that it is okay to get names wrong sometimes – the important thing is being respectful as you work on getting them right. Joshua also emphasises this point: "The Name Charter references the power of reminders and reintroductions. That's the bit where it gives our staff permission to go, 'I'm really sorry, I've forgotten your name', or, 'I'm really sorry. I know you've told me how to pronounce your name, but could you tell me again?'".

Taking a whole school approach

The roll out of The Name Charter involved different teams – including classroom teams, the admin team and the premises team – looking through the charter and discussing what it meant for them and their practice. The Name Charter was displayed in every classroom and meeting room in Willow Dene, as well as the spaces that families use. Emma shares that this frequent physical reminder has helped to embed the approach across the whole school: “I think that’s helped with the buy-in and the gravitas of it. The important thing is giving people time to digest and understand it, and to then have it remaining in their classrooms as a non-negotiable”.

This whole school approach has prompted teams to ask how The Name Charter impacts their existing work. As a result the admin team has launched a project to create a list of phonetic spellings for the names of both children and parents. The team has started to contact families directly to ask them to provide the phonetic spellings of their names. This has been done through a letter which shares the details of The Name Charter and the project’s ambitions, to help families understand the wider context.

The impact

The Name Charter is having an impact at the individual level also, as demonstrated by the changes Emma has made to her own recruiting practices: “I do a lot of the recruitment at Willow Dene and now if there’s a name that we’re not familiar with I ask ‘How would you like your name pronounced?’, something which we didn’t used to necessarily do before...and sometimes, if I’m not quite sure if I’ve got the correct pronunciation, I’ll say, ‘Am I saying that right?’, making sure that we are using people’s names correctly”.

Emma has also noticed a change in the way she approaches children’s names she has historically struggled with: “Personally there was a child for whom I would always muddle through their surname because I was never quite sure how to say it. And since we started doing this work, I just practised and practised and practised and now it rolls off the tongue”.

As a special school, Willow Dene’s students often travel to school by bus, which means staff don’t have as many ‘at the gate’ interactions with parents and guardians as at other schools. This makes phone calls and specific touch points even more important as opportunities to build relationships. Joshua shares the impact The Name Charter has had on the quality of staff interactions with families during their start of year meetings: “At the beginning of the year where we’ve been doing baseline meetings for new children, there have been cases where I’ve joined the meeting with the teacher before the parents joined us and we’ve had a look at the parent’s name and they’ve gone, ‘How would I say this? Should we have a quick Google to see if we can find the pronunciation?’”. Emma also notes that the quality of phone calls home has improved, with staff using parents’ and guardians’ names instead of simply asking for ‘mum’ or ‘dad’.

Wider benefits

The introduction of The Name Charter has also had a positive impact on staff sense of belonging. Joshua shares that during a CPD session - focused on the Hemisphere Action of 'getting to know the children you teach and the families they come from' - a member of staff came forward at the end to share her own personal experiences. She told Joshua that "very rarely do people get her name right" and that the Hemisphere conversations had helped her realise the impact this was having on her. This highlights the ways that interventions focused on increasing the sense of belonging for children and families can also have a positive impact on the experiences of staff, opening up new conversations between people who have worked together for years.

Emma adds that the conversations started by The Name Charter have flowed into other areas of school life, helping the team to identify small and new ways to help team members feel welcome and connected: "A recent introduction this academic year was for HR to send an email to everybody welcoming a new member of staff. It included a photo because we're so big and we're over two sites...I'm not sure that that would've necessarily happened without all of the conversations around importance of names and people being represented".

Next steps

Willow Dene does not see its work on The Name Charter as 'complete' but as an evolving piece. For its next steps, the school plans to move its phonetic spelling list - which is currently on an Excel sheet - into Bromcom, its school data system. The system already stores each child's preferred name, and the hope is to add a new column containing the phonetic spelling of their first name also.

The school is also sharing its approach with other schools in the Compass Education Trust. Whilst the team has created a Trust-wide template, Emma and Joshua stress the importance of each school going on its own journey instead of simply copying the document. Emma shares that this is because the conversations surrounding The Name Charter are the key driver of behaviour change: "If you don't go on the journey that we went on to get to that point, then you are not going to have the buy-in or the understanding from the rest of the school".

Advice and reflections

Joshua also notes the importance of schools adapting the processes surrounding The Name Charter to their specific environment. He highlights that mainstream schools also need to consider how to teach children about names and pronunciation, which is not something appropriate for all of Willow Dene's pupils as many are non-verbal: "I think there's something really important in the process of thinking about what we're doing as a school. I know one of our other Trust schools has taken it to their own leadership team and thought about what it looks like at their school, but also how they're involving children within this as well".

Reflecting on Willow Dene's experience of Hemisphere, Joshua's final thought is on the importance of moving beyond the initial training session to embedding the Hemisphere Actions into school strategy: "Those Actions are where the power came from. They made us ask 'How do we start to use this to make a difference and to drive change? Those Actions really have formed part of our school strategic development plan".



THE NAME CHARTER

A name is more than just a word; it is an essential part of a personal identity, culture, and sense of belonging. The way we recognise and address one another shapes our relationships, fosters respect, and builds inclusive communities. This charter affirms the significance of learning, remembering, and correctly pronouncing names as a fundamental act of respect and dignity.

The Significance of a Name

- A name carries deep personal, cultural, and familial significance. It is often a reflection of heritage, values, and traditions.
- Addressing a person correctly by their chosen name fosters a sense of respect, belonging, and validation.
- Mispronouncing, shortening, or disregarding a person's name whether intentionally or not can contribute to feelings of exclusion, frustration, or erasure of identity.

The Role of Names in Identity and Belonging

- A correctly spoken name affirms a person's identity and allows them to be seen and recognised as their true self.
- Inclusive environments honour individuals by making an effort to learn and use names properly, promoting respect and equity.
- People from diverse cultural backgrounds may have names unfamiliar to others, but this should not serve as a barrier to inclusion.

Best Practices for Learning and Using Names

- Asking for Pronunciation: If uncertain about how to say a name, one should politely ask the individual for guidance, e.g. "Could you please help me pronounce your name correctly?"
- Listening and Practicing: After hearing the correct pronunciation, make an effort to repeat and practice it until it feels natural.
- Using Phonetic Aids: Writing down the phonetic pronunciation or associating it with familiar sounds can help in remembering.
- Encouraging Corrections: Individuals should feel comfortable correcting mispronunciations without hesitation or discomfort.
- Respecting Given Names: Avoid assigning nicknames or shortening names unless the person explicitly expresses a preference for it. Avoid referring to a person by their familial role as a way of not having to use their name. e.g. "what do you think, mum?"

The Power of Reminders and Reintroductions

- It is natural to forget a name, but rather than avoiding the person, it is respectful to ask again: "I'm sorry, could you remind me of your name?"
- Reintroducing oneself can also ease social interactions, e.g., "Hi, I am [Your Name], and I just want to make sure I say your name correctly."
- Making a genuine effort to remember and use a name correctly strengthens relationships and deepens social connections.

Names hold power. They are the first gift we receive in life and a core part of our identity. Taking the time to learn, pronounce, and use names correctly is a simple yet profound act of respect. By honouring names, we honour the people who carry them, fostering a school community where everyone feels seen, valued, and included.

St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive School: Piloting the phonetic register



This case study focuses on how St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive School made a concerted and successful effort to 'get names right' through the introduction of a phonetic register. This work was led by Lori Beck, Head of Inclusion.

At the end of each Hemisphere Education module, staff are invited to select a number of Actions to focus on over the coming year. On identifying that 'get names right' was the most popular Action at St Thomas More, Lori got some advice from the Hemisphere team on how to approach this issue. She took their advice about focusing on phonetic spellings and decided to test it out for herself – with a twist.

Piloting phonetics

Lori was aware that she struggled to pronounce one of her student's names correctly because the incorrect pronunciation was 'hard-wired' into her brain. She decided to address this through having an honest conversation with the student's guardian, sharing that she was finding the pronunciation hard and asking for help: "I explained to her, 'I'm really struggling. I'm stuck in this loop. Would you mind if I recorded you saying his name for me so that I could play it before I see him each lesson?'".

For the next two weeks, Lori played the recording ahead of each of her lessons with the student. She shares that tackling her fear was a key part of this exercise: "I played it before I went into each lesson because I wanted to make sure that I wasn't afraid of saying his name". The approach worked so well that Lori decided to ask more students to record their names into her phone to help her practice pronouncing their names correctly also.

As a part of this process Lori also spoke with students to find out how they felt about teachers regularly mispronouncing their names. Whilst some were resigned to the fact that it happened – having had their names mispronounced for all of their time at school – some students were clear that it had a negative impact on them. Lori quotes one student as saying: "It drives me nuts. I wish they would just get it right. I have to correct someone at least once a day".

Getting staff buy-in

Following the success of her personal pilot, Lori decided to roll out an intervention focused on getting names right for all staff. To begin, she put together a presentation for staff to explain why this mattered. The presentation included testimonials from students at St Thomas More about the impact of having their names mispronounced by teachers. Lori also included research and examples from the British Sociological Association on the topic to reinforce the point. She shares

that including evidence from an external organisation had the desired impact: “I could see the mood in the room shift when I had that slide up - in a good way. Then I came back to the purpose of why we need to do it, why it’s important and how we should be allowing our children to address mistakes when they happen”.

During the session, Lori also made the topic relatable to the predominantly White team by sharing that the issue did not only affect global majority students. She shares that she was able to use the example of her own daughter, who has a name that is regularly mispronounced by school staff, to introduce the concept of phonetic spellings: “I did say to them that it wasn’t just global majority pupils who experienced difficulty with this, but actually our White pupils as well. I was able to use my daughter as an example because her name is constantly mispronounced including by members of staff in the school. I asked people to say what they thought her name was based on the spelling of it...and then I broke it down and that’s how I introduced the phonetic spellings because hers is a really easy one to do”.

Rolling out the phonetic register

Lori introduced staff to the Race Equality Matters ‘#MyNames’ campaign, which encourages people to spell out their names phonetically to normalise the practice. Once staff had included the phonetic spellings of their names in their email signatures, form tutors then delivered a session for their form classes explaining what was happening and why it was important. Students were then asked to write down the phonetic spellings of their names, independently or in groups, which they shared with their teacher at the end of the lesson.

The phonetic spellings were uploaded to a shared spreadsheet for staff to use when producing their seating plans. Lori highlights that specific time was carved out for this intervention, with Heads of Department asked to schedule time in which staff could focus on the phonetic register. This gave staff time to identify the names that they found tricky and put in place a plan for working on the pronunciations.

The impact

The impact was almost immediate. Lori shares that the initial work started in July and the intervention was rolled out in September, with students providing unprompted feedback just two weeks into term: “Within two weeks we already had several students say ‘the new attendance officer, when she said my name on the tannoy, it’s the first time anyone has said my name right in four years!’”.

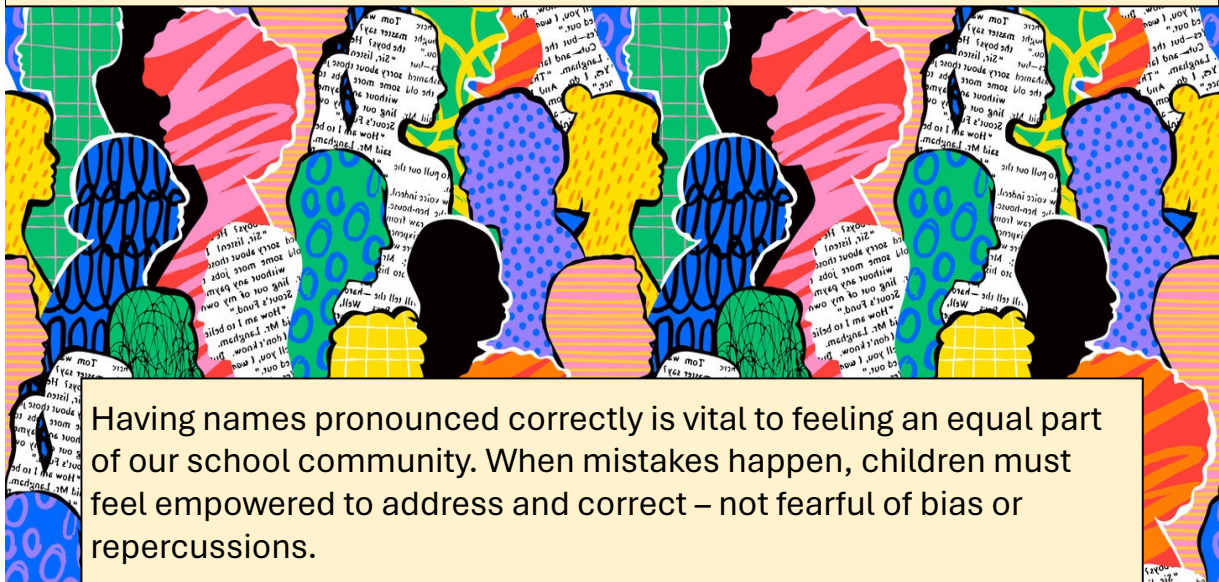
A Year 7 student who sought Lori out between classes to share her feedback summed up the positive impact that getting people’s names right can have: “The phonetic register has been the best thing ever. I’m so happy you did that, because if all schools did this, then we’d all be able to come to school feeling really welcome. I want everyone to keep working at this because it really means a lot”. Understanding the importance of letting staff know that the effort they were putting in was working, Lori got permission to pass on this feedback and sent an email to all staff to thank them for their efforts.

Reflections and next steps

Reflecting on the changes made by St Thomas More, Lori highlights that it is possible to make significant improvements in a relatively short period of time: “Six years ago if a teacher said a child’s name incorrectly and that child challenged them on it, they would’ve been in trouble for challenging the teacher. Then we got to a place where the response was ‘Okay, you can come up and speak to me at the end of the lesson if I’ve not said it correctly’. Now we are in a place where it’s just like second nature - if you said their name wrong, I hope now most students would feel empowered to say it correctly”.

The plan is for the intervention to be taken one step further at St Thomas More, with the phonetic spellings of names included in all registers via the School Information Management System. This ambition to embed the change into every classroom reflects Lori’s commitment to focusing on the small but important things that help children feel like they belong: “If you are here and you are part of our school community, it is our duty to you to learn, to be prepared to see you for who you are, and to get that right”.

Pronunciation of Names



Having names pronounced correctly is vital to feeling an equal part of our school community. When mistakes happen, children must feel empowered to address and correct – not fearful of bias or repercussions.

One of the presentation slides used in sessions with staff at St Thomas More.

Eltham Hill School: Using intergenerational conversations to support Black girls

This case study focuses on Eltham Hill School's approach to raising awareness of the experiences of Black African and Caribbean girls at school, which includes intergenerational conversations. This work was led by Maxine Ferguson, Deputy Headteacher.



The first module of Hemisphere Education focuses on the experiences of Black children at school. As Eltham Hill is a girls' school, the senior leadership team decided to focus on understanding and improving the experiences of Black girls at the school.

Preparing staff

Maxine identified that it was important to carefully prepare staff before they independently completed the online training. She shares that she was keen to acknowledge and address the different fears that staff might have: "We gave staff time to go away and look at the resources that we provided to understand what racial literacy was and to consider what their fears were about. Those fears were on two sides because it's fear from the staff who may feel like they're going to get it wrong, and fear from the staff who are worrying, 'is this going to bring up feelings of my experiences that I had previously?'".

As senior leaders had completed Hemisphere before it was rolled out to all staff, Maxine was able to offer check-in meetings to staff to discuss their concerns ahead of the training. She says this created a sense of safety and support ahead of the training: "It was just an informal session so that people could come in and talk to me about what they might be concerned about. We had about four people come to that - the feedback was that staff found it really useful to know that it was available".

Maxine also ran a pre-training group session for a mixture of teaching and non-teaching staff, which she shares was important for supporting learning across the staff body: "It could be midday supervisors or people that work in the office. And it's really important to have mixed groups so that people can learn from each other. Otherwise people operate in silos, and then they feel like they can't ask questions or they're not able to develop their understanding".

Continuous support for staff

Once everyone had independently completed the online training, there was an optional check-in session in which staff could share what they'd learnt from Hemisphere. Maxine shares this session was motivated by the need to provide staff time and support to process the training: "People didn't have to share, but we wanted to give people a space to share. And I think that's really important that they've got time to decompress afterwards".

Following the online training, staff developed Personal Action Plans to be revisited throughout the year. Maxine shares that she opted for a 'little and often' approach to help staff remain focused on the plans: "I think it's great them going off and doing their individual action plans, but it's very easy for it to fall off the agenda if you don't have that 'drip drip' approach. We decided that for all of the staff meetings across the year we would have a section that was dedicated to our focus on Hemisphere, which is understanding the experiences of Black girls".

Using evidence

The follow up sessions involved conversations that led to staff sharing their own experiences of being at school – both when they were students and as adults. They also discussed feedback that had been gathered from the Black girls at the school, which revealed experiences of stereotyping: “They felt that whilst we’re really good as a school, they still felt that there were lots of stereotypes about them as young women and who they were, that affected the way that staff treated them. And it was in a covert way, not necessarily an overt way. They readily acknowledged that sometimes it was unconscious biases, that the tutor didn’t necessarily mean to do it - but it’s that thing of intention versus impact, isn’t it?”.

In addition to the conversations about staff and student experiences, Maxine introduced research data from Milk and Honey, an organisation that amplifies the voices of Black girls. The recent research was based on data from 15 schools similar to Eltham Hill and covered themes raised in the Hemisphere training module and in the student feedback. Maxine shares that this helped to dispel the notion that the issues facing Black girls weren’t relevant to Eltham Hill: “When we’d done the first part of the training, some of the feedback from a few members of staff was, ‘this is really useful, but it doesn’t affect us, does it? We’re great as a school’. I think them seeing the hard facts and that this research was just done in the last two years confirmed to them that we can’t afford to be complacent”.

The impact

To keep up the momentum, staff reported on their progress against their Personal Action Plans at regular staff meetings. They also created a resource bank including lists of helpful videos and books for developing racial literacy. Maxine monitored the activity through surveys and found the primary impact was on relationships between students and staff. She shares a specific example: “Feedback from one of the midday supervisors was that there’s a student who she found quite combative. Through the training she understood she needed to take a different approach. And so when she saw that student in the playground the next time she said, ‘oh, I heard that you’ve got this award’. And that was the door she opened to talking to that student. And she built a relationship with that student”.

Eltham Hill’s response to the Hemisphere training took an unexpected but welcome turn when staff and students starting to speak with each other about belonging and inclusion. During a reflection session in July, the Head of Year 11 shared her experiences as a Black British woman and her experiences within the UK education system. She also reflected on how they had shaped her



Photos of the assembly on identity and belonging run by Eltham Hill’s students.

understanding of belonging, identity and bias. The Head of Year 11 then worked closely with a group of Year 11 students to develop and deliver a whole-school assembly exploring their experiences as Black girls.

This intergenerational sharing had a powerful effect says Maxine: "Many members of the staff and students said it was so emotional for them because either it really did cover their own experiences, or, for staff, it proved to them how important the work that we were doing was". The girls spoke about their difficult experiences but also the parts of their cultures and identities that they wanted to be celebrated. They also shared their thoughts on what staff and students could do to improve the experience of Black girls at school.

Following the assembly, the Head of Year 11 worked with the students to create a video showing positive representations of Black women across the school, from Year 7 to staff members. For Maxine, the creation of this video confirms that the feeling of safety she set out to create has truly been embedded at Eltham Hill: "I feel like it actually is safe for us to share because it takes real bravery to stand up and talk about something that's deeply embedded and part of your day-to-day experience that you hold the whole time. It takes bravery to lay that bare and to share that story".

Next steps

The next step in Eltham Hill's Hemisphere journey is to complete the module on the experiences of South Asian students. Maxine will be building on what worked well in the first year of the training and has plans to launch the module with an hour long meeting. This meeting will include two South Asian members of staff sharing their experiences of being South Asian in the UK. In addition, focus groups will be conducted with the school's South Asian girls to gather feedback on their experiences. Staff will reflect on the findings of these focus groups as part of this first session.

This approach illustrates Maxine's view that each school has its own source of evidence to inform its work on race and inclusion: "It's really important that when we say our work is evidence-based, we acknowledge that evidence is here all around us. Of course the literature and the theory that has gone on before is important. But it's living and breathing and understanding that everything that we do has an impact on our young people and on our school community as a whole".

Advice and reflections

When asked what advice she'd give to schools preparing to complete Hemisphere, Maxine reiterates the importance of ensuring staff have dedicated time to prepare for and complete the training. She also emphasises the importance of a 'drip drip' approach that keeps the Hemisphere Action Plans at the front of everyone's minds, with accountability built in through check-in meetings with line managers or senior management.



A photo of staff at Eltham Hill School cooking together.

Finally, she highlights the role that a constant feedback loop can play in keeping staff motivated, even when it seems hard to see the impact of their efforts: "Sharing the feedback from staff and what they have learned - that's really empowering for other staff...For example, that one conversation that you have with that child, if everyone's doing that, that's how we are changing the culture of the school. And staff said that was really useful to feel that just the little things that they do can make a real difference". Maxine says that this focus on small acts became a theme of the school's work on inclusion, captured in the phrase: "Small acts, multiplied by many people, transform the school experience for every child."

Maxine's closing reflections highlight the importance of intergenerational conversations and relationship building to fostering a sense of belonging for all students: "Understanding the experience of Black children means you need to actively make an effort to get to know them, because at the end of the day, they are children and every single child in our school deserves to feel like they belong. And it's very easy to just take things at face value. But remember, as adults, we come into the school with preconceptions because we are also subject to a process of socialisation. And it's really important that we look at where those ideas are coming from - that's what being racially literate means".

Conclusion

The case studies shared in this report illustrate the meaningful changes that schools can make to belonging and inclusion in relatively short periods of time. The importance of continued conversation, reflection and learning comes through in each example. This is fitting as these principles also drive the design and development of each Hemisphere module.

In line with this ethos, Hemisphere Education plans to expand opportunities for its partner schools to share their experiences, examples of what works and advice on how to overcome challenges. We hope that over the coming years we will be able to build a community of schools committed to supporting one another to strengthen belonging and inclusion.

About the author



Naomi Kellman is Rare Technology's Head of Research and Data. She studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the University of Oxford and joined Rare on graduating in 2011. In this role she founded Target Oxbridge, a programme that has helped over 600 Black African and Caribbean students secure Oxbridge offers, and currently supports hundreds of students a year.

Naomi spent 2012 to 2015 working on education policy at the Department for Education and the Treasury, and served three years as a secondary school governor. She co-founded the BAME Fast Stream Network and the Oxford Black Alumni Network, and has made appearances on BBC News, Channel 5 News, ITV News and Sky News to discuss diversity in education and recruitment.

Naomi conducts the research that underpins the Hemisphere Education modules. She combines the findings of existing studies with new insights into student experiences gathered through interviews, focus groups and survey data.

Naomi is a Director of the Institute of Student Employers and a Trustee for The PRIME Commitment. In 2021 she was awarded Manager of the Year by the Inspiring Women in Business Awards.



Hemisphere Education is a neuroscience-informed digital training platform that helps schools strengthen safeguarding, close outcome gaps and develop high quality inclusive practices. Founded in 2022 by Marisa Leaf, Hemisphere is used by 400+ schools, education partnerships and trusts, and has won seven awards for its impact.

www.hemisphereeducation.com

Hemisphere Education is a Rare Technology product. Rare Technology Limited is registered in England and Wales at 8 Blackstock Mews, Islington, London, N4 2BT.

Our company registration number is 5549110.