

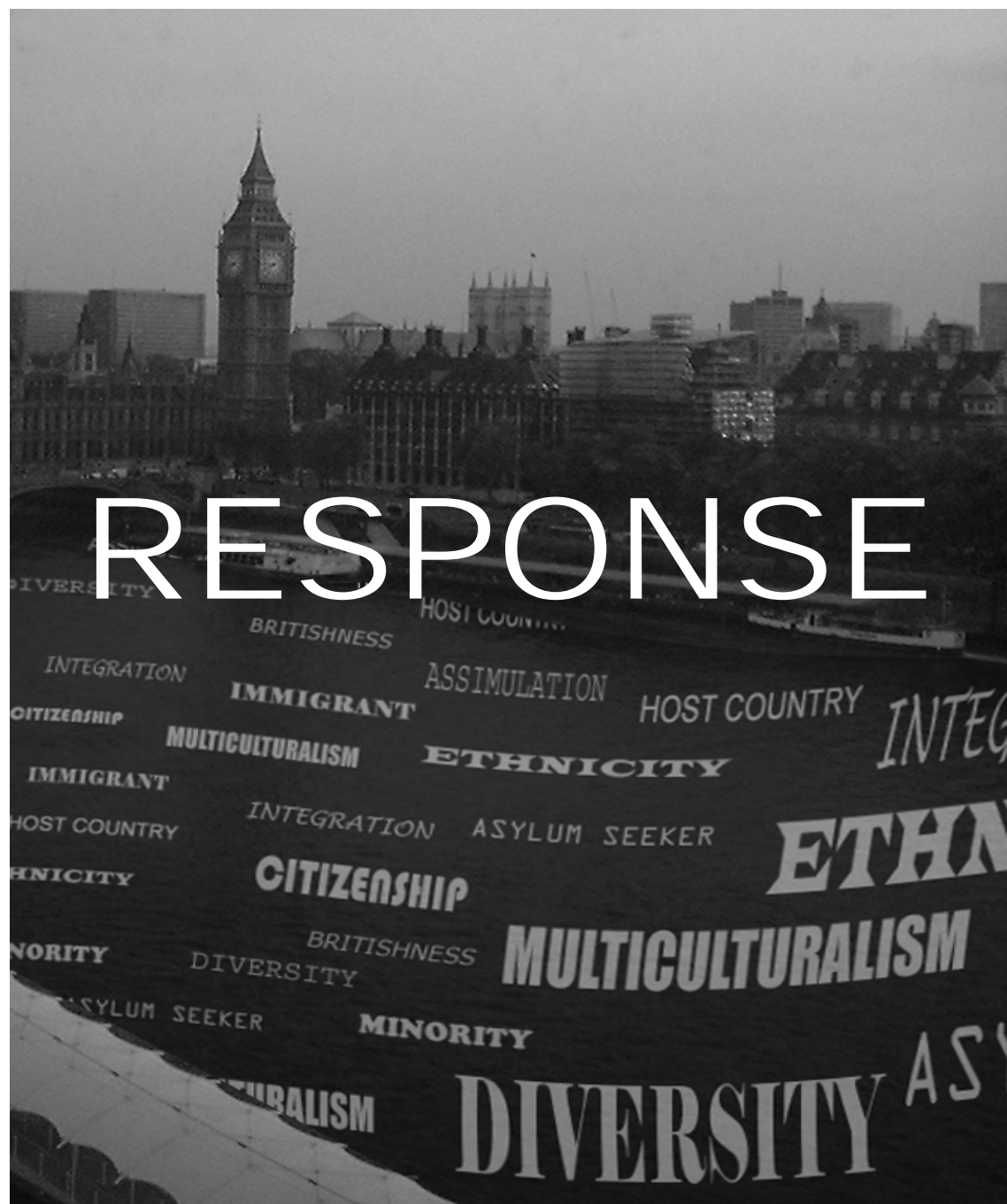


RACE ON THE AGENDA

RESPONSE

to the DfES consultation paper "Aiming High:
Raising the Achievement of
Minority Ethnic Pupils"

May 2003



Introduction

Race On The Agenda (ROTA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the DfES publication *Aiming High: Raising the achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils*. For ease of reference we will follow the chapter layout of the consultation document, responding to those questions we consider the most salient.

Whilst we appreciate that the invitation to consult focuses on a number of specific points, we do feel that there are a number of issues that need to be considered but have been omitted from the document.

History and Background

ROTA is a social policy think tank that seeks to provide solutions through ideas. We work closely with other organisations within the voluntary and statutory sector to ensure that the needs of BME communities are placed high on the agenda in the policies, planning and delivery of a range of services.

Chapter 2 – A Whole School Approach to Achievement

Strong Leadership

- Strong leadership is crucial to raising standards and achievement in schools. Whilst we welcome the leadership programme mentioned, we feel that the programme should specifically target African Caribbean and Pakistani teachers who are vital to providing a leadership role model, particularly for underachieving Black boys. Whilst the proposal mentioned will go some way towards raising standards overall, we feel that the major need for improvement lies within the area of Black African Caribbean and Pakistani boys.
- We welcome the Institute of Education's pilot leadership *Shine Project* and would also suggest that LEA's endorse and encourage such schemes. Having said that, we still think that more needs to be done to monitor the recruitment and retention of African Caribbean and Pakistani teachers. In addition, local education authorities should publish strategies mapping the need for BME teachers in their schools and put plans and targets in place to recruit them.

Role of Governors

- Local education authorities should be required to publish in the annual Education development plan, how they plan to recruit BME school governors. They should also put in place strategies to show how they monitor the recruitment and set targets for recruiting.

- We feel that the proposal mentioned does nothing to target African Caribbean and Pakistani groups in particular.

Consultation Questions

1. What more should Government do to support head teachers and school management teams in delivering a whole-school approach to raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils?

We feel that more emphasis should be placed upon the training of head teachers and school management teams in relation to the cultural needs of minority ethnic pupils. This training should take place before the taking up of a position and while the individual is in post. Moreover, teachers and management teams need to be encouraged to keep abreast of the latest BME-related research carried out by agencies and academics, and should consider incorporating aspects of these findings, as and when necessary.

4. What more can be done to recruit, retain, support and promote more minority ethnic teachers and other skilled adults in schools?

Although we welcome the work of the Teacher Training Agency, we feel more scope and recognition ought to be given to minority ethnic adults working alongside teachers as teaching/class room assistants, learning mentors etc. Many of these individuals have a good rapport with pupils and their skills have to be acknowledged and seen as a concomitant to the whole learning process. (Currently, many teachers resent their presence in classrooms, deeming that their professionalism is being undermined non-qualified staff.) However, ways must be found to resolve this impasse for the benefit of pupils.

Additionally, many classroom workers display an aptitude which signifies that they have the wherewithal to become qualified teachers, and a procedure should be established that allows this progression.

Furthermore, we think that insufficient weight has been placed on the role of parents in this discussion. Successful schools often contain a range of adults – including parents who are involved in activities such as family-centred learning. Also, schools should develop ways in which parents can play a more constructive role within their working life. (Currently, the first real and lasting contact BME parents have with schools occurs when their children are excluded.)

5. What more could the Department do to:

a) Raise achievement of African Caribbean pupils?

We welcome the fact that from September 2003, Ofsted will be entering into a dialogue with parents to ascertain what their children's scholastic and extra-curricular needs are. However, we believe that programmes need to be developed which allow teachers to listen to their pupils' concerns, hopes and opinions.

Also, trainee teachers should be provided with more guidance and preparation on the race, class and gender of their pupils to overcome any existing cultural biases. (This should particularly take place with those intending to work in areas with a large minority ethnic constituency.)

b) Reduce exclusions of African Caribbean pupils?

We think that more emphasis should be placed on the setting of achievable and measurable targets.

Additionally, alternative forms of education must be developed for those who the academics and practitioners think will not benefit from the existing system.

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