

4.10 Celebrating Diversity – Enabling Flourishing

Leaders in education cherish diversity and inclusion, recognising that their communities are inherently better and richer in their differences. They take every opportunity to celebrate learning together, and hold their doors open to people from all backgrounds and traditions. Leaders unlock opportunities for their children to flourish in a wide variety of disciplines, not simply those that are measured. They patiently nurture development and growth, knowing that character stands at the heart of educational achievement.

Celebrating Diversity

An authentic Christian vision for living well together is one that is scandalously inclusive: where all are welcomed, and where everyone gets to play a part. Leaders should not seek diversity and inclusion just because it is the correct thing to do, we should pursue it and chase it down because it is inherently better. Diverse teams do not simply tick boxes or fulfil targets. We think, lead, teach and learn better because of our diversity.

The New Testament envisages a community where there “is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3.28). It is a community bringing their varied history, talents and desires, coming together in unity across their differences, and especially sensitive to discrimination against the disadvantaged. Indeed, Paul writes, “...there should be no division in the body... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.” (1 Corinthians 12.25-26)

While leaders embrace opportunities to celebrate living and learning together,

they recognise that the chequered history of faith-based inclusion usually requires particular attention to ethos, pedagogy, curriculum, appointments and use of resources in order to counter stereotypes of judgement, unjust discrimination, and often unconscious bias in relation to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and relations among faith groups. The dignity and integrity of each must be respected, and good practices can form generations to come, helping to re-define community, replace division, foster reconciliation, and shape ways of living better together.

The horizon within which a school lives and thinks can combine the local and the global, with concern for “every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9-10). And the earth itself, on which all life depends, cannot survive without the global ecosystem and its biodiversity. There is a growing movement, not least among young people, to respond to the environmental crisis, and it needs to be resourced by education. Biodiversity is a particularly fascinating area of inquiry, and celebrating it offers an attractive opportunity for combining knowledge, imagination, and practical relevance.

1. How would you know that a school cherished and celebrated diversity and inclusion? What might you see, what might children and adults say about their experiences?
2. To what extent do you agree that ‘we think, lead, teach and learn better because of our diversity’?
3. What kind of unconscious biases do you have to work hard to remove?
4. What does it mean to live well together in your community, and how do your relationships reflect this desire?