

Barking and Dagenham Race and social justice – programme overview

Introduction

The race and social justice programme was formally launched with all schools in the borough in September 2021. Prior to the formal launch, we invested around ten months in shaping the programme and building school support and engagement.

The focus and structure of the programme was informed by extensive research into leading practice elsewhere, including support from Paul Miller, Professor of Educational Leadership and Social Justice, who was engaged to advise on the development and shape of our programme across the first six months of the project. We have also worked with the BAME Education Network, and have visited colleagues leading similar programmes in other London boroughs and across the country.

Programme focus

The programme is focused on three themes:

1. Student experience and inclusion
2. Staff recruitment, progression and experience
3. Curriculum

Leadership

The programme is led by Paramjit Roopra, Executive Headteacher at Northbury Primary and Thomas Arnold Primary, and by Ben Spinks, Chief Executive at BDSIP, a school-owned social enterprise providing professional support services to schools. It is steered by a leadership team comprising primary and secondary headteachers.

Delivery

The programme is strongly school-led, with an emphasis on schools assessing their own starting point and priorities. This is supported by a self-evaluation tool, which provides a framework that schools can use to identify existing strengths and development areas.

Over 50 schools have identified an RSJ facilitator. They facilitate (but do not 'own') the work in their school. Facilitators meet regularly and are supported through a training programme and regular sharing of practice between schools.



Race and social justice – delivery highlights

Delivery highlights in our first year include:

- The formal launch conference in September 2021. Attended by over 100 delegates, including 51 (out of 60) headteachers in the borough. The conference introduced the programme themes, launched the Barking and Dagenham race and social justice charter, and shared leading practice locally and nationally, with input from nationally prominent speakers in the field. The conference was rated at 4.9 out of 5 by delegates.
- Establishing a headteacher steering group and a network of over 50 RSJ facilitators, each leading work in their own school.
- Through the RSJ facilitators' network, carrying out school-led self-evaluations and developing action plans linked to the school improvement plan in schools across the borough.
- Taking RSJ as the main theme at our annual governors' conference – engaging chairs of governing bodies in the programme and seeking their support in adopting the charter and in nominating lead governors for race and social justice.
- Launching the RSJ charter and self-evaluation toolkit, providing schools with practical tools to help them assess their starting point and future priorities.
- Providing training for RSJ facilitators and headteachers, including in racial literacy, in how to create an inclusive culture in schools, and in building a curriculum for all.



“Firstly, can I say a huge thank you for all the help, advice and support you have provided us with what has been a momentous turning point in my school. The discussions and reflections that have come about as a result of me feeding back from your conferences and networking events have been astounding; long may it continue for the change and benefit of the children.”

