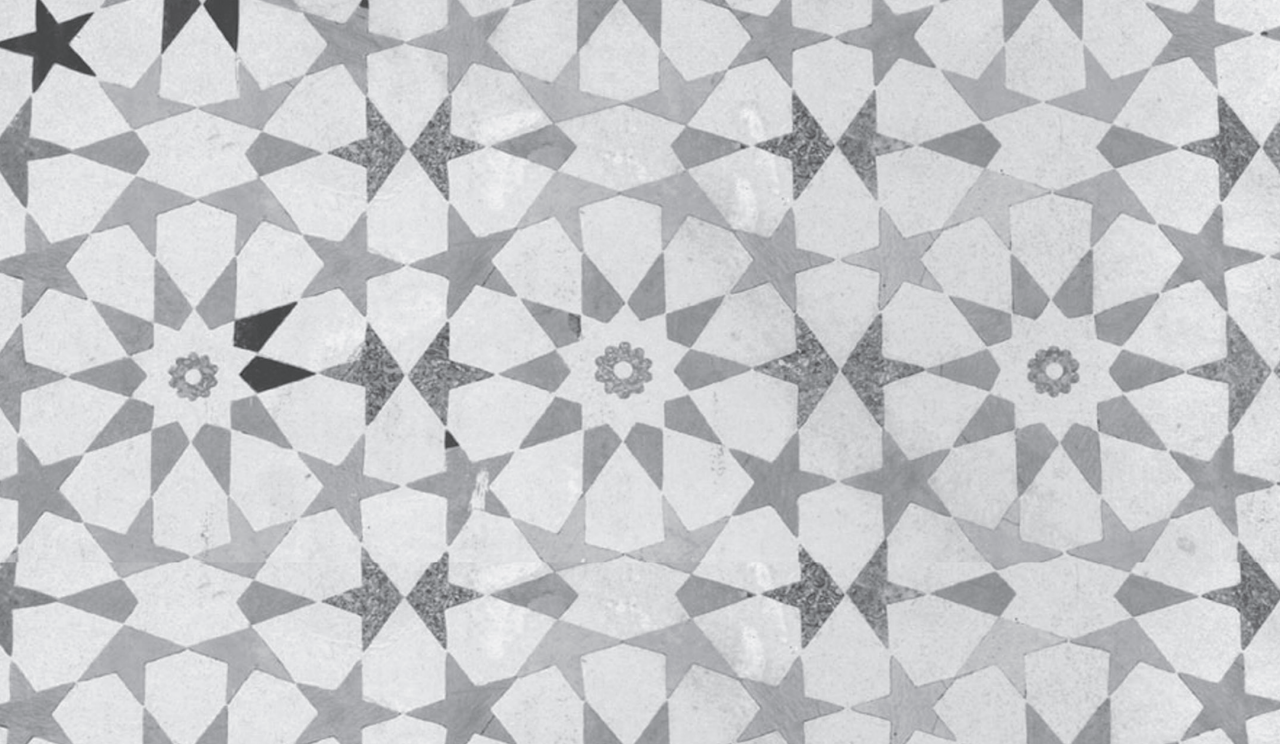


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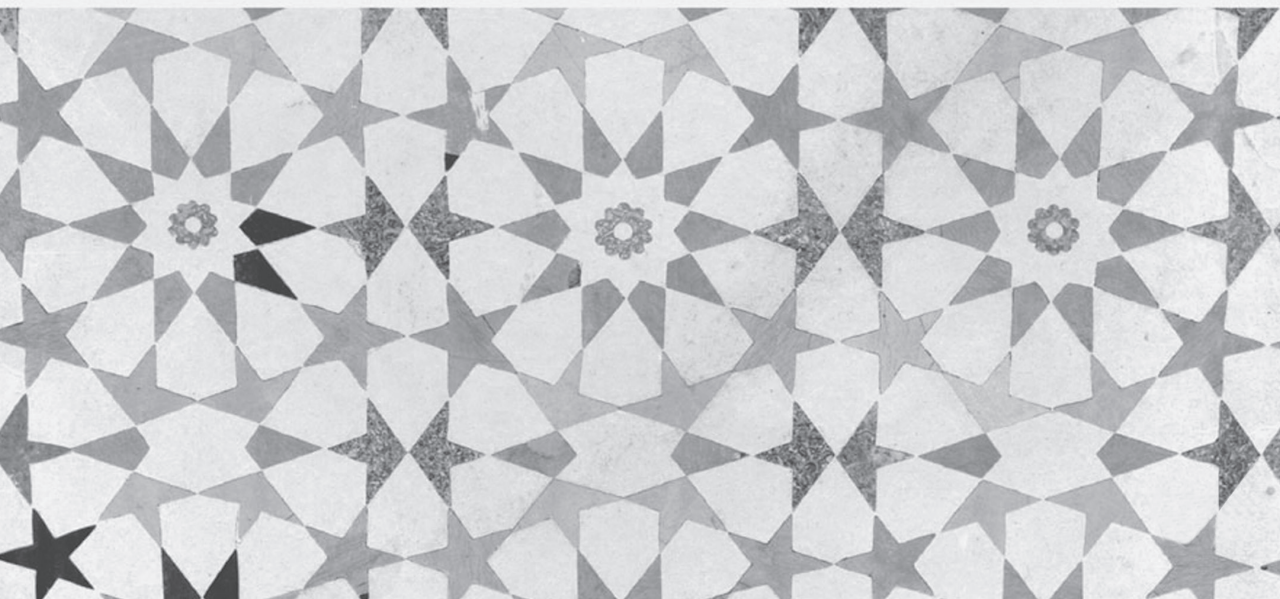
Gianna Knowles and Vini Lander

Diversity, Equality and Achievement in Education





DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND ACHIEVEMENT IN EDUCATION



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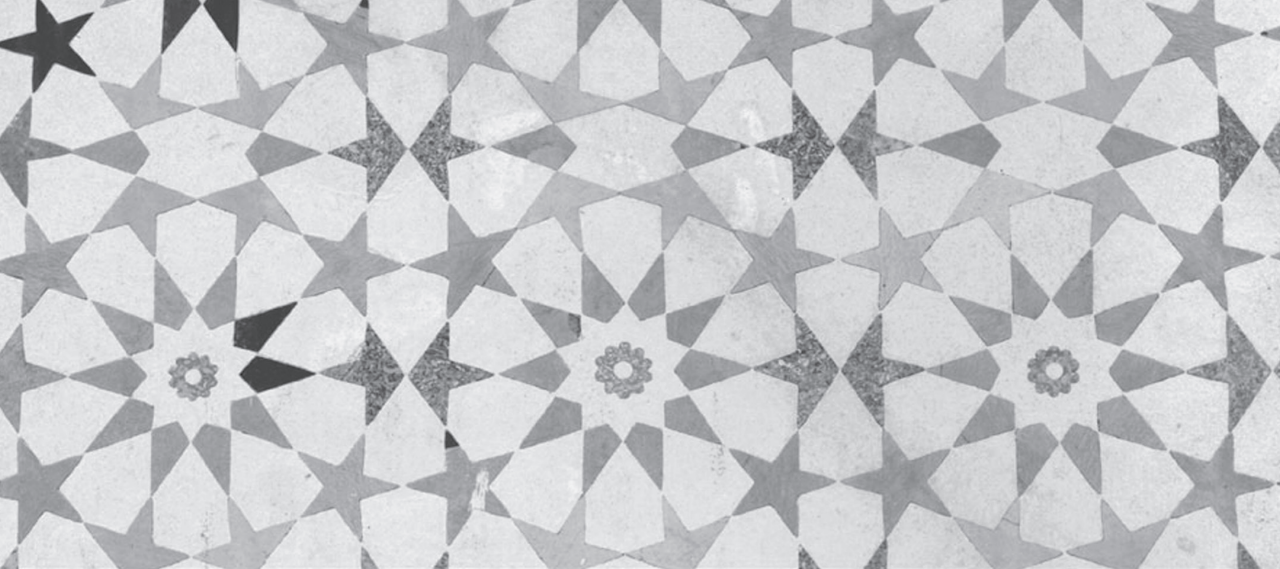
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To
Kishan, Matthew, Rebecca, Simran and Tejpal
and to all children living on society's margins

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CiC	Children in Care/Child in Care
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DAD	Disinhibited Attachment Disorder
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DDA	Disability and Discrimination Act
DED	Disability Equality Duty
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfE	Department for Education
EMAS	Ethnic Minority Achievement Services
FSM	Free School Meals
GRT	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller
IND	Immigration and Nationality Directorate
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PSE	Personal and Social Education
RAD	Reactive Attachment Disorder
TESS	Traveller Education Support Services

About the Authors

Gianna Knowles is a lecturer in Educational Studies at the University of Chichester in the UK. She has also worked with teacher trainee students from across Europe at the University of Jönköping in Sweden. Before working in higher education, Gianna gained over 12 years experience of teaching in primary schools in England, in London and the Midlands. She has worked in Local Authority Educational Advisory services, working with individual teachers and whole-school staff to develop school-wide practice and policy. Gianna has experience of being an Ofsted inspector and reviewer for the Quality Assurance Agency. Her research interest is in the area of social justice and inclusion.

Vini Lander is a Principal Lecturer with overall responsibility for all primary education provision at the University of Chichester. She has had experience of teaching science and working with Black and Minority Ethnic pupils and with bilingual and multilingual pupils in her time as a teacher. Vini has also been an Ofsted inspector for primary schools and initial teacher training.

Until recently she was Deputy of Multiverse, a professional resource network on achievement and diversity. As part of this role Vini has worked with tutors and student teachers across the country to help them to integrate aspects of diversity and equality into their work. As part of her wider professional role Vini has delivered training sessions to a range of education professionals on diversity, inclusion and achievement across England and in Germany.

Vini's research interests lie in the field of diversity and initial teacher education. She is undertaking doctoral research in this area.

Introduction

Gianna Knowles

There is a well-known poem written by Pastor Martin Niemöller in the 1930s. Many of you will know it as 'First They Came', it begins 'First they came for the Jews/And I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew'. (Niemöller, n.d.) It is a powerful poem and often cited because its seeming simplicity voices complex and challenging ideas, particularly about diversity and equality. The poem is about who individuals identify with and who they see as people who are different to them. It is also about their response to that perceived difference. The poem explores how individuals form alliances with others, especially those who seem to share similar values, attitudes and beliefs to them and how they can alienate those they perceive as being different. Part of what the poem expresses is how people may form these alliances or reject others, deliberately or unwittingly. That is, people, including ourselves, are not always aware of how our actions, or lack of actions, impact on others. The poem serves to remind us that we are, in the end, all part of the same community. Therefore, if we are looking out for others, we are also looking out for ourselves. Similarly, if we fail to support others, at some point, in times of our own need, we may find that there is no one there to support us.

These may seem challenging ideas to open this book with. The power of the poem is that while it was written at a time of significant historical events in Europe, it still remains relevant today. The poem serves to remind us that, in diverse societies such as Britain, unless we remain aware of issues such as diversity and equality, deliberate and unwitting acts of discrimination may still happen. With particular reference to this book, the poem reminds us that as adults working in schools with children with diverse needs and from diverse backgrounds, we need to be particularly mindful of our role in schools in ensuring that all children are provided for and are not discriminated against, however unwittingly.

In particular, as those concerned with children's learning, we need to consider not only that children come from diverse backgrounds, but that we also need to be proactive in recognizing the differences between children. We need to be aware of individual children's

different learning needs and ensure that we are providing them with equal opportunities to learn. With regard to achievement, in terms of learning, we also need to be mindful, as Chapter 1 explores in more detail, of the link between diversity and a child's likely achievement – or underachievement in school. That is, it is part of our role to recognize and understand the diversity in our society and, as those who work with children, to respond to it in a way that enables children's achievement. We have a professional, moral and legal duty not to be culpable in allowing the diversity in our schools to lead to inequalities in educational experiences and underachievement for children.

These ideas are not new. Since 1997 schools have been successfully addressing many aspects of diversity and equality in relation to educational achievement, through developing their inclusive practice. In particular, schools have worked hard to ensure that children with specific learning needs, needs that previously might have acted as barriers to their achievement, are being taught in such a way that they are enabled to access learning effectively. Many schools are now expert at providing an inclusive education that can meet a wide range of learning needs, be they needs such as dyslexia and other cognitive learning needs, or the needs of children who are, for example, on the autistic spectrum. Schools are providing equal opportunities for children that enable them to engage in all aspects of school life and to achieve in their learning. However, as understanding about inclusion has developed, so too has the realization of the diversity and breadth of need children may bring to the classroom. For example, increasingly since the inception of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda, it has been understood that if equality of achievement for all is really to be realized, schools must ensure the content and delivery of the curriculum they provide for children is designed and planned with a greater understanding of the wider social context that children are part of. That is, to provide equal opportunities for children to achieve, schools need an approach to learning that also encompasses understanding about the backgrounds that children come from. Be that background in terms of culture, socio-economic status, whether the child is living with their birth family or is a Child in Care. That is to say, it is necessary to have knowledge and understanding of how the life experiences children have had, their sense of self, or identity and their current home life, impact on how they access learning. Providing equal opportunities that enable all children to achieve is about understanding the diverse families or home lives and childhoods children have, and why these need to be taken in to consideration when planning learning activities.

All those who work in the education sector are bound by legislation relating to the aspects of equality and diversity briefly outlined

above, and the relevant legislation will be explored, as appropriate, throughout the book. However, depending on the role an adult holds in a school, there are also professional skills, knowledge and understanding relating to equality, diversity and achievement that they may need to demonstrate they have achieved. For example, teachers are required to *understand* how ‘developmental, social, religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic’ (Training and Development Agency, 2008: 8) aspects of children’s lives will impact on their engagement with their learning in schools. Teachers should also be able to take these considerations into account and ‘make effective personalised provision for those they teach’ (Training and Development Agency, 2008: 8). Professional development available for teaching assistants, including the achievement of Higher Level Teaching Assistant status also requires a similar understanding of these concepts. In the same way, all schools – and those working in them – are bound to consider aspects of diversity, equality and achievement as outlined in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (now the Department for Education) document (DCSF, 2007a) *Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion*. This document states: ‘the curriculum for all maintained schools should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society’ (DCSF, 2007a: 1). It goes on to say: ‘schools have a duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups’ (DCSF, 2007a: 1). It is also worth noting here that, although the statutory curriculum in maintained schools varies depending on which country within Great Britain a school may be situated, the principles, with regard to inclusion, equality and diversity do not change. While the concepts explored in this book, and advice and guidance offered in translating understanding into action, might be discussed through particular aspects of specific curriculum documentation, the principles that underpin the ideas and practice discussed can be applied to most situations in many schools.

This introduction began by discussing how discrimination can occur because of diversity and difference. We have also seen how Britain and British schools have already made great strides in seeking to include children with diverse learning needs in their learning provision. However, the research on children’s achievement shows that while there has been progress in terms of providing equality of educational opportunities for some children, particularly those who have cognitive learning needs, there are still children, who because of needs that derive from their background, continue to fail to achieve.

In seeking to explore diversity, equality and achievement in education this book begins, in Chapter 1, by discussing how our own understanding about ourselves, our own identities, values, attitudes and beliefs can impact on how we approach notions of diversity and, how those understanding then translate into our professional practice. Chapter 1 begins the exploration of the key themes relating to diversity, equality and educational achievement which will then be explored in greater depth throughout the rest of the book. In particular, the chapter examines how diversity relates to the well established inclusion agenda in schools. It introduces the link between diversity and educational achievement and underachievement and how the notion of identity is important for exploring diversity, equality and achievement.

Chapter 2 picks up the discussion about identity and diversity begun in Chapter 1 and explores the concept further. This chapter broadens the exploration of why it is important to consider identity when thinking about diversity and examines what is meant by identity. The chapter also discusses how identity can be said to be formed and may change or develop over time, depending on a person's experiences and the influences around them. The link between identity, values, attitudes and beliefs is also examined.

In Chapter 3 'Diverse Families, Diverse Childhoods', how children need to form secure attachments when young to enable them to continue to thrive, is discussed. The chapter also explores that while for many children these secure attachments are with their immediate birth family, there is still considerable diversity in what might constitute a child's 'family' and who might 'parent' a child. In the same way, the chapter considers that, just as there is diversity in terms of what might constitute a 'family', similarly there are diverse experiences of what might be termed 'childhood'. That is to say, no one family or one child may be the same as another. In relation to these ideas the chapter discusses the notion that, while of considerable significance in the raising and welfare of children, a child's immediate family is only part of the structures and systems a child interacts with to enable them to thrive. That is to say, schools too contribute to what happens to a child and their childhood and, therefore, need to consider how they respond to this aspect of their role, particularly where they work with children from a diverse range of backgrounds.

In Chapter 4, the authors explore with the reader how, over the past 50 years Britain has become an increasingly culturally diverse society. However, the term cultural diversity itself is one that can be misinterpreted and not always fully understood. Often the term is used as if it relates only to race or ethnicity. Race and ethnicity are part of what is meant by cultural diversity, but essentially it refers to

the wide range of differing values, attitudes and beliefs that many groups in British society hold. Therefore, the chapter seeks to clarify the meaning and importance of the term 'ethnicity'. It discusses how, in terms of education, ethnicity and achievement are linked. It introduces the notion of whiteness, which is emerging as a concept in the literature on race and education in England, and explores how the concepts discussed in the chapter enable those who work with children to reflect on and evaluate their own position with regard to the ideas raised.

Chapter 5 discusses class as the first of the chapters of this book that begin to explore diversity and equality by looking at how the factors discussed above can impact on the achievement of particular, identifiable, groups of children and their families. In particular, the chapter discusses why class is part of the diversity, equality and achievement in education debate and what is meant by class. It explores the link between class and poverty and discusses the term 'social capital' and how it is linked to class, diversity, equality and achievement.

Chapter 6 discusses the debate surrounding boys, girls, gender issues and achievement, it acknowledges that gender is a factor that impacts on equality and achievement but also cuts across ethnicity and class. Exploration of gender issues and their impact on children's achievement at school have swung back and forth across the 'gender divide' over the past 30 years; therefore the chapter begins by exploring the salient contemporary issues related to gender and education in Britain. It sets these issues within the wider historical 'gender' framework and discusses prevailing myths about gender, seeking to provide counterarguments from recent research.

Chapter 7 'Coming from a Traveller Background: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children – Living on the Margins', explores the history and origins of Gypsy and Roma people and discusses the stereotypical assumptions about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. The chapter examines the educational debate related to children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritages, discussing the difference between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups. The discussion also invites the reader to consider their positionality with regard to this most marginalized group of children.

Chapter 8 'Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children', explores what refugee status and asylum seeking means in terms of the law and personal experience in Britain. It discusses why people, children and families seek refuge or asylum. It explores the distinction between the terms refugee and asylum seeker and examines how the experience of refugee and asylum seeking children may impact on their learning and achievement in school, while also discussing how

schools can support the well-being of refugee and asylum seeker children through understanding the wider needs of their families.

Chapter 9 discusses what it means to be a looked-after child or a Child in Care, exploring what is meant by 'looked-after' and how children come to be Children in Care (CiC). The chapter explores the role of multi-agency teams and the family courts in the process and where children go when they are looked after. The chapter discusses why CiC are particularly vulnerable to underachievement and why being looked after seems to have long-term negative impacts on a child's life chances. For example, looked-after children go on to form a disproportionate sector of the prison population. The chapter will give examples of good practice in terms of helping looked-after children to thrive and achieve.

The final chapter of the book, Chapter 10, concludes the book's exploration of diversity, equality and achievement by discussing enabling equality and achievement for children with disability. The chapter outlines what is meant by disability and the laws in Britain that schools need to be aware of, in relation to disability and working with disabled children. The chapter also explores what the barriers to learning for disabled children can be and what constitutes good practice in providing for disabled children and their families.

1

Diversity, Equality and Educational Achievement

Gianna Knowles

This chapter explores:

- How diversity is part of the inclusion agenda;
- The link between diversity, educational achievement and underachievement;
- How government research shows that children from diverse groups, such as minority ethnic families, deprived communities, Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families or children who are Children in Care, are among those most likely to underachieve;
- How the notion of identity is important for exploring diversity, equality and achievement.



Those of us who work with children, or who intend to work with children, know that when we are in the classroom we need to be aware of the needs of the children we are working with. However, what this chapter begins to discuss is that sometimes, unless we have had the opportunity to reflect on our backgrounds, values, attitudes and beliefs, we can unwittingly take into the classroom values, attitude and beliefs that can act as barriers to achievement for the children we work with, and actually prevent achievement occurring.

For over a decade schools have understood that children bring with them a range of learning needs. Schools have been working hard with the concept of inclusion to meet these needs and provide equal opportunities for children to achieve at school. The concept of inclusion, and the notion of inclusion in schools as it began to develop from 1997 (Knowles, 2010), is now a well embedded aspect

of educational practice. All those who work in schools to enable children to enjoy and achieve, whether in their academic learning or in realizing individual potential across a range of skills and attributes, have seen the enormous benefits the inclusion agenda has brought with it (Ofsted, 2006). Schools, their staffs and the children and families who attend them, are all much more aware of the ways in which children can be engaged in enjoying and achieving at school, whatever learning needs they bring to the classroom.



Activity

Think about the range of learning needs you are aware of. These may be learning needs you have direct experience of working with in the classroom, or they may be needs you know about from your reading, talking to colleagues and through your general life experience.

Much of the initial work around the inclusion agenda focused on enabling children with learning needs – those related to cognitive learning needs as well as social and physical needs – to be included in mainstream schools. Almost all schools are far more competent now than they were 10 years ago in providing an environment that meets the needs of all children; including children with particular needs such as dyslexia, autism or a physical or sensory disability of some sort. Indeed, Ofsted in their 2006 report *Inclusion: Does it Matter Where Children are Taught?* (Ofsted, 2006) found that: ‘the most important factor in determining the best outcomes for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is not the type but the quality of the provision’ (Ofsted, 2007: 4). They went on to state: ‘there was more good and outstanding provision in resourced mainstream schools than elsewhere’ (Ofsted, 2006: 4), where ‘elsewhere’ included special schools dedicated to catering for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. One of the central aims of the inclusion agenda is to remove the barriers to achievement in learning that some children had been identified as experiencing prior to 1997.

How children are achieving in their learning is tracked and monitored by Ofsted. To help schools improve in terms of their educational provision for children, every year, Ofsted provides information to each school about how their children are achieving against national trends and averages. The information is also broken down to show how different groups of children within the school are achieving.

That is, the information records the number of children in the school who have free school meals, special educational needs or who are 'looked-after' or are Children in Care (CiC). The information also shows how children are achieving by gender and ethnicity (Ofsted, n.d.; RAISEonline, 2010). The idea being that, through having their children's achievement reported to them in this way, schools can analyse the data and use it to further improve their educational provision. The current system for reporting this information is called: Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self-Evaluation or RAISE (RAISEonline, 2010). The collecting and reporting of this achievement information has been taking place for over 10 years, it has provided invaluable information for individual schools about how they are enabling their children to achieve and improve that achievement over time.

The data has also allowed Ofsted and the government, to look at national trends with regard to achievement. The data allows comparisons to be made between how different groups of children are achieving, compared to one another. What the data has shown consistently is that some groups of children always achieve more in their learning than others. That is, the data shows there is not equal achievement between diverse groups of children. The way the children are grouped, for purposes of reporting achievement notes for each school the number of children who have a special educational need (SEN), the range of ethnicities in the school, the number of children who have free school meals, how boys and girls are achieving compared to one another and the number of children in the school who are CiC.



Activity

Go back to your list of learning needs that you compiled earlier. Highlight those needs you have itemized that relate to a cognitive learning need, like dyslexia or a motor learning disability (formally known as dyspraxia), or are related to a need such as autism or a sensory or physical disability.

Now, in a different colour highlight those needs that relate to the wider social circumstances of the children. For example, children from economically deprived homes (often measured by the number of children who are eligible for free school meals – FSM), CiC, children who have a disabled parent or children who are black or minority ethnic children.

(Continued)