



Equalities Newsletter

March/April 2022



Welcome to the March-April 2022 Equalities Newsletter!

Welcome to another packed edition of the Equalities Newsletter. Spring is in the air, days are getting longer and the blossoming spring flowers are on their mission to bring joy to all.

As ever, you'll find a host of resources linked to events in March and April, from Holi (Hindu festival of spring on 18th March) to International Romani day (8th April). Here are a few highlights...

In this issue, we explore the **intercultural and multifaith perspectives of fasting (p. 8-10)**. Centred around International Women's Day on Tuesday 8th March and this year's theme 'Break the Bias', we bring you the first of our "In Conversation With" feature, in which we meet an **inspirational leader, Talat Yaqoob**, for a Q&A session.

The three schools sharing good practice in this issue illustrate how equality, diversity and inclusion has been incorporated and celebrated in different ways—through a community cookbook development, book purchasing plan involving the wider school community and being intentional about resources and strategies to use in welcoming students from different language background.

We hope you can take some time to browse through...with a cup of tea and a bunch of daffodils!

In this issue...

- **Calendar of events** for March and April, with selected resources
- **Sharing Good Practice:** Dean Park Primary School, St Mark's RC PS, Gracemount PS
- **Focus on:**
 - **Intercultural Perspectives on Fasting**
 - **International Women's day**
- **Equalities Training Opportunities**
- **Additional information and resources**

Sharing Practice

We're always on the look-out for practice to share through the newsletter—we'd love to hear about what you're doing - large or small!

Please send in your contributions

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PLEASE NOTE

While we aim to check all information, resources, events, website links and social media sites, we suggest that you explore these to ensure that they are suitable for your settings and communities. Please do let us know if we have missed anything! We welcome your feedback and suggestions for items to include. Please send these to:

Nikhat.Yusaf@ea.edin.sch.uk Sandra.1.Scott@ea.edin.sch.uk

Calendar of Events



MARCH

- 1st** Maha Shivaratri (Hinduism)
UN Zero Discrimination Day
Shrove Tuesday (Christianity)
- 2nd** Ash Wednesday/Lent begins (Christianity)
- 5th** **World Book Day**
- 8th** **International Women's Day***
- 18th** **Holi (Hinduism)**
- 20th-21st** **Naw Ruz (Baha'i)**
- 21st** **World Down's Syndrome Day**
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- 21st-27th** Celebrate Neurodiversity Week
- 25th** International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade
- 29th –3th April** **World Autism Acceptance Week**
- 31st** International Transgender Day of Visibility

APRIL

- 2nd-1st May** **Ramadan (Islam) *** Ramadan 2022 is expected to begin on Saturday 2nd April, following the sighting of the moon over Mecca.
- 8th** **International Romani Day**
- 14th** Vaisakhi (Sikhism)
- 15th-23rd April** **Passover (Judaism)**
- 15th** Good Friday (Christianity)
- 17th** **Easter Sunday (Christianity; Orthodox Easter falls on 24th April)**
- 22nd** **Stephen Lawrence Day**
- 26th** Lesbian Visibility Day

*See focus pages later in this issue.

Selected Resources

MARCH

5th World Book Day This year's theme is **"You are a Reader"**, with a focus on reaching children from disadvantaged backgrounds. World Book Day is a powerful opportunity to introduce your students to authors from diverse backgrounds.

[World Book Day](#) - is a registered charity with a mission is to give every child and young person a book of their own.

World Book Day: embracing works by [writers of colour](#) - gal-dem

World Book Day 2021: 14 amazing LGBT inclusive books for children ([pinknews.co.uk](#))

18th Holi is the popular ancient Hindu festival, also known as the "festival of spring", the "festival of colours", and the "festival of love". The festival signifies the triumph of good over evil.

Resource links: [BBC Teach](#) [CBeebies Little Passports](#)

20th-21st Naw Ruz (Baha'i) The first day of the Bahá'í calendar year and one of nine holy days for adherents of the Bahá'í Faith. [British Council](#) [Activity Village](#)

21st World Down's Syndrome Day The theme for 2022 is #InclusionMeans.

[Inclusion Means...](#)—the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) calls for: "full and effective participation and inclusion in society" [Resources](#)

[World Down Syndrome Day](#) - Downright Special

29th –3th April World Autism Acceptance Week

[World Autism Acceptance Week 2022](#)

Autism Awareness Week 2022 - Event Info and Resources ([twinkl.co.uk](#))

APRIL

8th International Romani Day is a day to celebrate Romani culture and raise awareness of the issues facing Romani people.

Resource Links: [Holocaust Memorial Day Trust](#) [International Romani Day](#)

15th-23rd April Easter (Christianity) The most important festival in the Christian calendar. It celebrates Jesus rising from the dead. [Easter - Teaching Resources - BBC Teach](#) [Cracking Easter resources for EYFS and primary | Tes](#) [Easter Resources | School Activities | Year 1 & 2 / KS1](#) ([twinkl.co.uk](#))

15th-23rd April Passover (Judaism) commemorating the Biblical story of Exodus — where God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Resource links: [TES](#) [BBC Bitesize](#) [Jewish Museum London](#)

22nd Stephen Lawrence Day commemorating the life of Stephen Lawrence, who was murdered in a racist attack in 1993.

Resource links: [StephenLawrenceDay.org](#) [TheRedCard.org](#)

Professional Learning Opportunities

8th March 2022 - 4.00-6.00pm CF2628: Working with refugee and asylum seeker children and families

For all staff working with refugee and asylum seeker children and young people in Edinburgh schools and EY settings. The course aims to support a better understanding of the life experiences and factors affecting health, wellbeing and learning; and confidence in supporting their health, wellbeing and learning within school or nursery. Please email Lucy.Chetwynd-Cox@ea.edin.sch.uk or see the [Inclusion Hub for more details and further EAL PL opportunities.](#)

10th March 2022 6.00-7.30pm Religions for Peace UK Women of Faith Network & Edinburgh Interfaith Association Webinar or International Women's Day.

[Register here](#) to join Debora Kayembe, first black female Rector of Edinburgh University, Lama Zangmo, Tibetan Buddhist Nun and Head Teacher of of Kagyu Samye Dzong and Olivia Marks-Woldman, Chief Executive of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust as they talk about their groundbreaking work, and what has inspired them to create change.

23rd March 2022 - 4.00-6.00pm The Human Library

Audience: SMT and Equality Co-ordinators—**course code CEC 2631**

See p.5 for further information

Professional Learning opportunities for anyone teaching learners from Gypsy Roma Traveller Communities. For more detail on this see the [STEP website.](#)

9 March, 12.30-2.00pm and 10 March, 4.00-5.00pm

Digital drop-in

Find out about *Digital families, Digital teachers and the STEP app.*

Do you have families who would benefit from a Digital Kit for learning at home? Drop in to this informal session to find out more.

31 March, 11.00-12.00 noon Seminar with Maureen Finn - Director of [STEP](#)

A digital space of belonging: possibilities for mobile children [Register here](#)

The Impact of Bullying on Deaf Children and Young People

E-learning modules—Online Learning from The Deaf Children's Society

Two FREE e-learning modules to help professionals gain confidence and competence in identifying and responding to bullying of deaf children and young people. Each module takes about 30 minutes to complete. [Enrol here.](#)

Professional Reading

A Curriculum for Global Citizenship?

Beyond the politics of greed to the recognition of need. Mark Langdon, Lecturer in Community Development at UWS and IDEAS member considers the urgent need for change.

"In one important respect at least, we are all global citizens. Despite the sharp and often cruel disparities of human experience we all share a planet, one which has been, and continues to be, used and abused in ways shameful and ultimately, both morally and physically unsustainable. "

Professional Learning Opportunity The Human Library



The Human Library

We are delighted to offer you the opportunity to join us online in exploring [The Human Library](#) on **23rd March 2022 4.00-6.00pm**. There are 60 places available for this exciting event. Audience—SMT.

Please book using **course code CEC 2631**.

The [Human Library](#) is a library of people. They host events where readers can ‘borrow’ human beings serving as open books and have conversations they would not normally have access to. Every human book from their bookshelf represents a group in our society that is often subjected to prejudice, stigmatization or discrimination because of their lifestyle, diagnosis, belief, disability, social status, ethnic origin etc.

The Human Library experience is a rare opportunity to explore, engage and take a deep dive into curious courageous questioning, daring discovery of difference, and conversation with cultures other than your own without risk of offence being taken or your language/knowledge having to be perfect. They turn awkward uncomfortable encounters with strangers into exciting adventures with people you perhaps wouldn't normally invite to dinner or encounter as colleagues.

“We aren't putting people into boxes but unpacking the boxes and understanding the labels we habitually attach to people.”

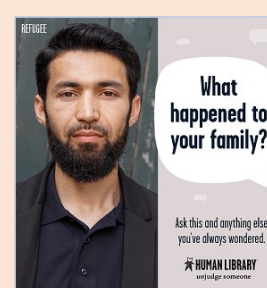
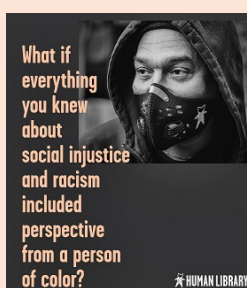
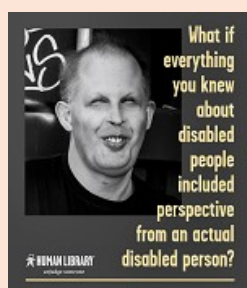
The Human Library even will encourage readers to open up and learn from Human Books exploring issues such as:

- Disability e.g. hearing and sight impairments, brain injury, wheelchair use.
- Ethnicity e.g. people from Black, Roma, Asian, Indian and mixed ethnic backgrounds
- Family e.g. child of an alcoholic, adopted, care experienced, bereavement, single parent
- Gender & Sex e.g. transgender, intersex, non-binary
- Mental health e.g. schizophrenia, depression, bipolar, anxiety, stress, burnout
- Neurodiversity e.g. autism, dyslexia, ADHD)
- Religion e.g. bisexual, gay, lesbian
- Social Status e.g. refugee, homeless, immigrant, unemployed/on benefits, ex-offender
- Victim/Survivor e.g. rape survivor, victim of stalking/bullying

*“It's not a safe space **from** risk or engagement but a safe place **for** curiosity, courage, discovery and un-judgement”*

If the event sounds a little daunting, or if you are just curious to know more, this [video](#) illustrates and explains the Human Library and prepares potential “readers” for the experience at the event. You might also like to take The Human Library's [Diversity Quiz](#). Don't worry—there are no right or wrong answers. The quiz shows us how we *all* judge, gives some facts about the different groups represented in the Human Library.

Book early to guarantee your place as it is sure to be very popular.



Professional Learning Opportunity

Teaching that matters for refugee students

Friday 1st April 2022 Online (MS Teams) 1.00pm-2.15pm. [Register here.](#)

Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh presents [Teaching That Matters for Refugee Students](#). Professor Joanna McIntyre and Dr Sinikka Neuhaus will share the development of a holistic co-constructed model of refugee education that originated through working with teachers in Sweden and England (McIntyre and Neuhaus 2021). After outlining the research underpinning the model, the presentation will focus on what matters when seeking to include refugee students and also how teachers matter for enacting a holistic model of inclusive education for refugee students. In the presentation, Jo will illustrate 'what matters' through sharing how she worked with teachers and school leaders in case study schools in England to further develop the model of inclusive education for refugee and asylum-seeking students based on the concepts of safety, belonging and succeeding. Dr Sinikka will explore the ways in which 'teachers matter' and are fundamental to the process of enactment of the model and some of the barriers and enabling factors to achieving this. There will be an opportunity to discuss the relevance of the model and its underlying concepts of safety, belonging and succeeding for current and future classroom practice and research.



Professional Learning Opportunity

A Day of Welcome Friday 17th June 2022

The Norfolk EAL Advisory Team invite you to take part in the **Schools of Sanctuary** initiative, **A Day of Welcome**, which takes place on **Friday 17th June 2022**. A Day of Welcome is a day of solidarity and learning in schools that aims to build a culture of welcome and understanding for refugees and asylum seekers. Regardless of where you are in the UK, you will be provided with ideas, resources and activities that make it easy for schools and families to participate, both in school and at home.

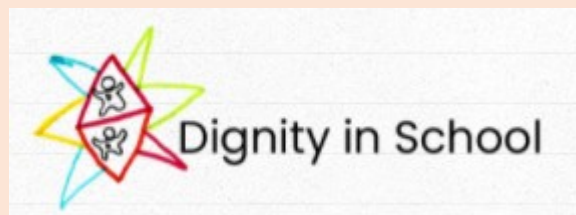
This annual day of learning for schools is designed to support your school and families in marking **Refugee Week** (20-26th June) and to send out a clear message that our communities are welcoming places for those in need of sanctuary. Last year **130+** schools across the UK took part.

Register your interest here: <https://tinyurl.com/DofW22>



Children's Parliament Resource: Dignity in School

From August 2021 Children's Parliament has been working in two partner schools on the [Dignity in School](#) (DiS) programme to demonstrate how primary schools can take a children's rights-based approach to their work.



The aim of the project is to make rights real for children in their school and, by doing so, ensure that their dignity is upheld in school and contribute to making them feel healthy, happy and safe.

What is Human Dignity?

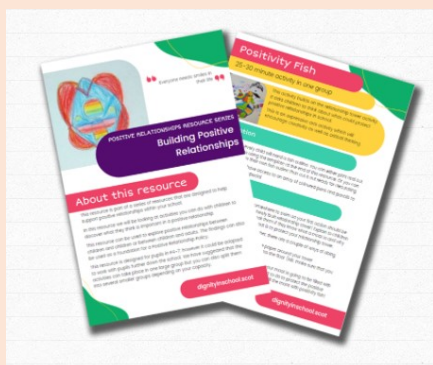
- Every human being is important and special. We call this **human dignity**.
- Respect for human dignity means that we should be friendly and kind to others and it is wrong to hurt other people or make them feel bad about themselves.
- No matter how others treat you, they never have the right to take away your human dignity.
- When you learn what human dignity means to you, you are less likely to accept when other people hurt, discriminate or put someone down.

The project wants to learn from children, to understand what a rights based education means to them.

The [DIS website](#) offers a wealth of resources to support your school's rights-based journey. The [Teaching Practice](#) resources will help get you started on your journey towards rights-based practice. Begin with the introductory tools to learn about the UNCRC in schools. Use the self assessment tool to help you discover your strengths and areas that may need a bit more support when it comes to rights-based practice.

The [Learning Kits](#) section offers templates and accessible tools for running your own sessions, including the 'Positive Relationship' series which explores what it means to build positive relationships in school, along with shout-free solutions. The 'Health and Well-being' series explores the key themes highlighted by children such as worry at school. Additionally, the project has developed Activity Kits which give guidance on how to run key workshops on the work of the Children's Parliament.

You may also like to explore Case Studies from the project's partner schools : Stoneywood Primary School in Aberdeen and Edinburgh's very own St John's Primary School.



Focus on Fasting: Intercultural Perspectives

Edinburgh's Equality Coordinators have already embraced the concept of the [Cultural Proficiency Continuum](#)* as a tool for Equalities Development and intercultural dialogue in education. In that spirit, we present the first of our Intercultural Perspectives features, this time with a focus on the practice of fasting. Fasting is now becoming part of our secular consciousness through an emphasis on a medicalised sense of "wellness". A cursory glance at any of our favourite social media platforms will offer us multiple perspectives from self-appointed influencers, egotistical TV medics with books to sell and, if you can get past the barrage of marketing, some bona fide experts who advocate the benefits of fasting. Indeed, once we look beyond the hype and examine its history, fasting is a deeply rooted spiritual practice across a wide spectrum of religious beliefs. Fasting is often associated with the season of Lent for Christians or the month of Ramadan for Muslims; however, many other cultures and religions around the world fast throughout the year. While the duration, practice, and specific reasons differ, all fasts have the similar goals of showing sacrifice and cleansing oneself. Religions and philosophies that practice fasting include: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Taoism, Jainism, and Hinduism.

We aim to give you a snapshot of some of the fasting practices celebrated by our learners and our colleagues and we hope to inspire you to investigate further.

Fasting in Christianity

The practice of fasting has been part of Christian life since Biblical times. Although fasting is not obligatory, many Christians regard it as a special way to get closer to God. At the time of writing, we are approaching Lent which begins this year on **Wednesday 2 March** and ends on **Thursday 14 April**. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a 40 day period of repentance, fasting and abstinence in preparation for Easter, the most important Christian festival of the year. By observing the 40 days of Lent, Christians remember Jesus' 40 days of fasting and repentance in the wilderness before he started preaching his message. On Ash Wednesday, many Christians attend a religious service where ashes are blessed by the priest and used to mark the sign of the cross on their foreheads. Ashes act as a symbol of penitence. The ashes are also a reminder of human mortality and refer to the Biblical idea that all humans come from dust and to dust they will return. There are many foods that some Christians do not eat in Lent, such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods. Some Christians choose to renounce something they really enjoy, such as cakes or chocolate. Lent is also a time when Christians devote their time to prayer and reflection.



Fasting in Hinduism

In Hinduism, individuals observe different kinds of fasts based on personal beliefs and local customs. Some Hindus fast on certain days of the month such as [Ekadasi](#), [Pradosha](#), or [Purnima](#). Certain days of the week are also set aside for fasting depending on personal beliefs. Fasting is also practised during religious festivals such as [Maha Shivaratri](#), or the nine days of [Navratri](#) (which occurs twice a year in the months of April and October/November during [Vijayadashami](#) just before [Diwali](#), as per the [Hindu calendar](#)).



*Lindsey, R. B., Nuri-Robins, K., Terrell, R. D., & Lindsey, D. B. (2018). *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders*. Corwin Press.

Focus on Fasting: Intercultural Perspectives

Methods of fasting vary widely and can range from the person not partaking in any food or water from the previous day's sunset until 48 minutes after the following day's sunrise to limiting oneself to one meal during the day, abstaining from eating certain food types or eating only certain food types. Generally, the fasting person is not supposed to eat or touch any animal products.

Fasting in Islam

As we approach the Holy Month of Ramadan, schools often ask us how to support our learners and colleagues who will be fasting. You can find a detailed guide for schools, [here](#) and some curriculum resources [here](#).

Ramadan, also spelled Ramazan, Ramzan, Ramadhan or Ramathan, is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (sawm), prayer, reflection and community. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is the fourth 'Pillar' of Islam, an act of worship of great spiritual, moral and social significance for Muslims. Fasting is a well-established practice in Muslims and is practised through the world in remarkably similar ways. The spiritual and moral dimension of fasting is of far greater importance than the physical one. Muslims are encouraged not to use Ramadan as an opportunity to avoid aspects of normal life but rather to cope with normal life under a different set of guidelines. During Ramadan, Muslims should focus on additional worship and God-consciousness to improve themselves in all aspects of their lives and dealings with others including their character, respect for others, kindness, forgiveness, good manners, avoidance of bad language and poor behaviour.



Muslims may also fast at other times outside of Ramadan to focus on prayer and worship by letting go of worldly desires. These fasts are recommended but not obligatory like Ramadan and may not always happen on set days.

Fasting in Judaism

Fasting plays a significant role in the Jewish religious tradition and is defined as total abstinence from all food and drink. Jews fast for reasons including for the atonement for sins; commemorative mourning, supplication and commemorative gratitude. There are six regular fast days in the Jewish year, on which each person is meant to make a personal accounting of his or her behaviour and resolve to return to the positive path.



Yom Kippur is the most sacred and solemn day of the Jewish calendar and is celebrated in September or October in the UK (4th October in 2022). According to tradition, the first Yom Kippur took place after the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and arrival at Mount Sinai, where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Descending from the mountain, Moses caught his people worshipping a golden calf and shattered the sacred tablets in anger. Because the Israelites atoned for their idolatry, God forgave their sins and offered Moses a second set of tablets. Yom Kippur is a day of fasting, prayer and reflection on the past year and a day to ask God's forgiveness for any sins. Jews mark the day of Yom Kippur by fasting for 25 hours. They also wear white and they don't wear make-up, perfume, or leather shoes. The most important part of Yom Kippur is the time spent in the synagogue.

<https://culturalawareness.com/fasting-around-the-world/>

Focus on Fasting: Intercultural Perspectives

Fasting FAQs

As we are approaching the Holy Month of Ramadan observed in Islam, we have compiled some frequently asked questions. Although these have arisen from in-school discussions specifically about Ramadan, the principles can be applied to fasting in other religious traditions.

What can we do to support our Muslim learners who are observing a fast?

- Find out dates for Ramadan (different start date each year) and wish happy Ramadan to the families e.g. via newsletter, school website etc. Do the same for other religious festivals your students may celebrate. The Equalities calendar in this newsletter is a great place to start.
- Read [Ramadan guidance document](#) (and beyond).
- Communicate with parents if schools have any questions or concerns.
- If a student is sitting exams or assessments then put arrangements in place to accommodate this.

How do children feel about fasting?

In Islam, and many other religions, fasting is seen as a blessing and a privilege, not a hardship. For example, Muslims around the world look forward to the month of Ramadan with great joy and anticipation. This excitement is shared by the children and they want to be part of this fasting practice from a young age. If a pupil is fasting then comments like, 'Oh, I could never do this!' or 'This must be so hard.' Or 'Not even water?' (classic) should be avoided.

What if a learner is not fasting?

Faith observance is a personal choice and no one should judge. Some families might not observe fasting and that is fine too. Children should never be made to feel that they are doing something wrong. If a child says that they are not fasting then accept it and move on. Comments like 'Oh, I thought everyone over the age of puberty is meant to fast' should be avoided. If you hear students saying something along these lines to each other you should remind them that it is not kind to behave towards each other like this and totally against the teachings of Islam where no one has the right to judge another.

Is it okay to ask questions?

It is fine to be genuinely curious and want to learn. However, a better way is to put some effort in to educate yourself (in this age of information, it is easy) and then have conversations if you want to clarify something or discuss an aspect. Remember it is not the duty of the pupil or the family to educate us, that responsibility should not be assigned to them by default.

Fasting has been around for centuries and will continue to be a regular practice for many cultures in the future. Remember to be culturally sensitive to those that are fasting to prevent your actions from making their practice more difficult.

If you would like to open up further discussion about any of these questions, our Senior Development Officer for Equalities would love to hear from you. Please email Nikhat.Yusaf@ea.edin.sch.uk

Focus on International Women's Day

2022 Theme: #Break the Bias

International Women's Day (8th March) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. It is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women, who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.

A 2021 paper from the [UN](#) notes that, although the world has made unprecedented advances, no country has achieved gender equality. Fifty years ago, we landed on the moon; in the last decade, we discovered new human ancestors and photographed a black hole for the first time. In the meantime, legal restrictions in many countries have kept 2.7 billion women from accessing the same choice of jobs as men. As of 2019, only 25 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide were women. Today, one in three women experience gender-based violence. In the light of these statistics, IWD is more important than ever. Change isn't just about big headline moments, legal victories and international agreements: the way we talk, think, and act every day can create a ripple effect that benefits everyone.



Celebrate women's achievement.

Raise awareness against bias.

Take action for equality.

The theme of IWD 2022 is #BreakThe Bias . One of the most powerful ways schools can support International Women's Day is by championing their own [#BreakTheBias campaign](#) within their school communities.

The [IWD website](#) offers an extensive range of resources for you to use in your establishment with learners and staff. The first step is working together with your school community to identify your school's IWD goals.

For example , you may decide to focus on:

- celebrating women's achievements in your community
- raising awareness of violence against women and girls
- influencing behaviour
- smashing stereotypes
- challenging bias
- launching new initiatives
- fundraising



Focus on International Women's Day

2022 Theme: #Break the Bias

We thought you might like some inspiration for school and community events and campaigns so here is a selection of possibilities.

1. Download IWD social cards

Access the [#BreakTheBias social media card templates](#) to make your own IWD social media cards to share across social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and more. Remember to cross your arms and strike the #BreakThe Bias pose showing solidarity and support. Post across social media using the hashtags [#BreakTheBias](#) and [#IWD2022](#).



2. Support learners to Prepare an IWD speech. Find resources [here](#).

3. Access the [IWD Lean In tools and resources](#) to host an International Women's Day event for your school and help challenge bias.

4. Download [IWD posters](#) and invite colleagues to collaborate through writing their #BreakTheBias pledges on posters and generating a list of tangible actions that can help #BreakTheBias.

5. Search the [IWD Speaker Directory](#) to secure an inspirational and engaging expert on a topic key to your agenda.

6. Learn about the [IWD Missions](#) and celebrate women's achievements, while working to change the game.

7. Develop or watch IWD videos. Watch the purposeful [IWD videos](#) as discussion starters, or broadcast them at IWD events to educate, motivate, challenge, and inspire audiences. Develop and [submit](#) your own [#BreakTheBias videos](#) for potential inclusion.

8. Fundraise for a female-focused charity. Despite the pandemic, IWD still continued its fund raising with 100% of the proceeds going directly to charity. IWD provides an important opportunity to fundraise and call for donations to support the ever-important work of gender equality focused charities, so [find out more](#).

We would love to hear about your establishment's IWD activities.

Please send articles and pictures to:

Nikhat.Yusaf@ea.edin.sch.uk or Sandra.1.Scott@ea.edin.sch.uk for inclusion in the next edition.

Imagine a gender equal world.
A world free of bias, stereotypes,
and discrimination.
A world that is diverse, equitable,
and inclusive.
A world where difference is val-
ued and celebrated.
Together we can forge women's
equality.
Collectively we can
all #BreakTheBias

In Conversation With Talat Yaqoob

We hope you will enjoy the first of our “In Conversation With” feature, in which we meet an inspirational Equalities leader for a Q&A session to gain an insight into their working life, share reflections and discuss their hopes and fears for the future.

In this issue, we meet **Talat Yaqoob**, an independent Equality consultant and award-winning campaigner and writer. Talat launched [Pass the Mic](#), the first and only directory of women of colour experts in Scotland, in 2019. She was the director of [Equate Scotland](#) from 2016–2020, advancing women's equality across the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sectors. In this role, Talat published the first intersectional analysis of women's experiences in STEM in Scotland. In the political sphere, Talat is co-founder and chair of the cross-party campaign group [Women 50:50](#) and is also a member of the [First Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Girls](#). Continuing her work for Womens' Equality and Rights, Talat is a member of [Gender Equal Media Scotland](#). As a member of [Royal Society of Edinburgh's Post-Covid-19 Futures Commission](#), Talat is part of a group of leading practitioners and thinkers supporting Scotland to emerging as positively as it can from the COVID-19 pandemic.



What Initially drew you to Equalities work?

I think it's a mixture of what you experience yourself and what you see around you. As a Muslim, as a woman of colour with migrant parents, there are many experiences of inequality and of racism, Islamophobia and sexism. I've experienced it and I witnessed it growing up and the consequence of seeing that is you notice that there's an unequal space around you. You notice that there's discrimination around you and it makes you want to do something about that. I became really involved in the feminist movement and in women's rights when I was a teenager and then when I went to university, I had a chance to find other people that were like me. I got really interested in politics and so even though I did a degree in psychology, I decided to do more political things and never looked back.

What are your hopes and fears for the next generation, specifically for girls and women of colour?

It's strange. On one side I've got a lot of hope because I see a generation of young people, particularly young women and girls who are unwilling to accept the status quo. I find that really exciting that they are coming to that conclusion much earlier than I came to it. They've got access to information and they've got access to inspiration that I never had, so that makes me hopeful. Also, the fact that we have roles like [Equality Coordinators].

At the same time, I have a real fear about the rising divisions across the world and the negative impact of technology. Social media, whilst it connects people, is also a place of a lot of sexism and racism and a lot of violence. I think we have to do something about that because it's only going to get worse. There's lots of research from Girlguiding that tells us that young women - we're talking 12, 13, 14 - have already experienced sexual assault. They have already experienced misogyny and that includes by their peers - by boys and young men in the playground. There's a huge role, a critical role for schools to take a new zero tolerance approach and to do some real equality education for girls, boys, young men and young women. There is a normalisation of misogyny and, whilst I talk about technology, there's a lot of influencers online who are actually encouraging men to be misogynists.

In Conversation With Talat Yaqoob

Schools have to be really aware of that and they have to explain to young people that it doesn't have to be that way. Respecting each other is going to get you the world that you want. That's why people who are in a position of being influencers in young people's lives - youth workers and teachers - need that opportunity to also do some self-reflection, some work, training and development around systemic inequality.

What advice would you give to a young woman interested in a STEM career today?

I think one of the things I would say is that the stereotypes of what STEM means might make you think you will only work in one scientific area. That's actually a myth – STEM is everywhere and that includes in music, in the arts, in creativity. STEM has a huge role to play across the different areas of work, and there's an option to combine your creativity and your scientific side in a way that there's never been before. Pursue music and art and find a way to do it with science. You can create the career you want with all these things combined. The jobs of the future are going to be in that overlap. Don't think it's one career for life. There's so many wonderful new paths to take within STEM so you can be artsy and you can be scientific. Don't close yourself off to all the things you could be.

What message would you like to send to the education system about and what you know they should be doing for women and girls?

When it comes to the education system, I would really like to see teachers be given the time and the support to be able to embed equality practice. I'd like to see people who are senior within the education sector giving people time and resources. I think we're still too stuck in creating a tool kit or a guide and sending it out across schools without the support and resourcing and development opportunities to help embed that into classroom culture and practice. What happens is people say "maybe we will do something on International Women's Day" or "maybe we'll do something for Black History Month", but where's the threading of equality in our day to day practice so that it's not just something that's added on. It can't just be a toolkit that's provided. You need time for capacity building to be able to embed that into everyday practice across all parts of the school so it's not something that happens on the side-lines, but instead it's a proactive equality focus happening just as a normal part of the school day.

What keeps you going through hard times in the fight for Equality?

Right now, it's really hard to be optimistic because we are coming out of a pandemic. There's bad news everywhere. You've got to look for the wins, no matter how small they are. Being an anti-racist, being somebody who's working for equality, there's no shortage of things that go wrong, but to keep me going I have to look for the little wins that are happening. Let's look at the Raith Rovers example.* It was the fans, it was the women's football team and it was prominent women like Val McDermid who were saying "we're done". Lots of male fans, were also saying "we're not participating in this". As a consequence, the club reversed their decision to employ a rapist. Yes, that's just one decision, but it's indicative of how a community can push for change and that's what we need on a bigger scale. We've just got to take responsibility for the space we're in. If we all did that, the dots would be joined. We'd get a tipping point, and we'd come closer to equality. You've got to look at where the wins are and think to yourself "more of this and we'll get through". It feels too slow, but you've got to take the joy where you can find it.

*In January 2022, Raith Rovers football club signed David Goodwillie. The decision was reversed after a public outcry. [‘We got it wrong’: Raith Rovers say Goodwillie will not play for club after outcry | Raith Rovers | The Guardian](#) [David Goodwillie: Raith Rovers says rapist will not play for them - BBC News](#) [Chairman Update: David Goodwillie | Raith Rovers FC](#)

Sharing Good Practice

Dean Park Primary School Diversity Cookbook

Pupils and the Parent Council from Dean Park Primary School in Balerno launched an impressive, sell-out Diversity Cookbook celebrating diversity, equality, inclusion and our strong community.

The fantastic keepsake features recipes, tips and quotations on what diversity means, from pupils, teachers, families, local community and prominent figures, who replied to persuasive letters from pupils and the Parent Council. Highlights include Oscar-winning Wallace & Gromit director Nick Park, chef Nadiya Hussain, Children's Laureate Cressida Cowell, Professor Sir Geoff Palmer, the First Minister and many more! Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver also sent us a special video message praising Dean Park's fantastic diversity and inclusion work.



Our talented pupils also illustrated the cookbook. After winning the design competition, Ayaan's colourful design features on the front cover, depicting diversity and unity. Impressive runner-up designs inside the cookbook are by Phoebe, Joseph, Elizabeth and Ruby.

The successful Diversity Cookbook showcases a rich mosaic of beauty and strength in diversity; a universal message to be inclusive, equal and kind; and strong pupil empowerment, parental engagement and teamwork across the whole school community.

Dean Park Parent Council sold 300 cookbooks, making over £1,000 (after costs) to be used for equality and inclusion initiatives at Dean Park. What a team!

Saafia Rahman, Dean Park Primary School Parent Council

Sharing Good Practice

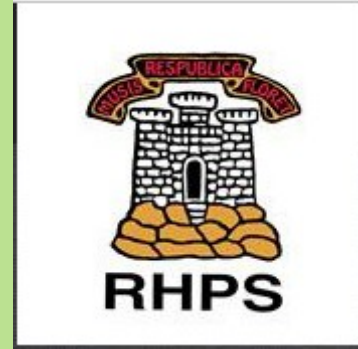
Royal High Primary School

Welcoming a New Bilingual Learner

Welcoming all new pupils into our Royal High Primary School community is an important part of our inclusive school ethos. Ensuring the transition into our school is comfortable and enjoyable is a top priority for us, especially when the pupil is new to English and is going to school for the first time.

As a class, we decided that we could make our classroom even more inclusive for all our pupils. Initially, we completed the register in the new language and learnt simple greetings to communicate with our new pupil. We then completed a series of activities which allowed our new pupil to get to know all the pupils in the class. Our first activity was a circle time introducing ourselves which allowed all pupils to talk individually to our new pupil while providing an opportunity for our newly arrived learner to learn new names. We then played a likes-and-dislikes game to allow everyone to find something in common. For this, we used visuals on the smart board and then used our thumbs to show whether we liked or disliked each option. This was an opportunity for our new pupil to connect with people who had the same interests – a possible first step towards new friendships.

Pupils also created a dual-language certificate highlighting what was special about our new pupil. Thanks to our supportive and welcoming start, our pupil has grown in confidence and has settled well into our school.



Kristy Dishington, P3 teacher, Royal High Primary School

If you would like some further reading on how to support newly arrived bilingual learners, you can find CEC resources on the [Inclusion Hub](#).

The [Bell Foundation](#) also offers guidance and resources on welcoming new bilingual learners.

Sharing Good Practice

St Mark's Primary School

Back in May 2021, we as a school took a closer look at the books available to our pupils. We completed an audit of each classroom library and found them to be lacking in terms of diversity.

Helen Drummond, our EAL Teacher, pointed us in the direction of 'A New Chapter Bookstore', an online bookstore specialising in diverse and inclusive books. [Inclusive and Diverse Children's Bookstore | A New Chapter \(anewchapterbooks.com\)](#)



The idea behind this bookstore is that the school creates a 'Wishlist' of books they would like in their school. I carefully selected books that not only would enhance and diversify our libraries but that are also on the Accelerated Reading programme—a motivational reading programme we use at St. Mark's, where pupils chose their own books within their appropriate level and take quizzes to demonstrate understanding.

'A New Chapter' site then hosts the wish list and we send a direct link to families via our school newsletter, Facebook page and school website. Here is our list - [Children's Online Inclusive Bookstore | A New Chapter \(anewchapterbooks.com\)](#) .

The parents then select and purchase a book (or books) which are then sent directly to us at school. There was no cost to us, and it has been really exciting to watch the books come in. I have attached a picture of some of the books that have been donated to us, - more have been arriving each week and we can't wait to get reading!

Fiona Carrigg, Equalities Coordinator, St. Mark's RC Primary School.



Young Persons' Equalities Seed Event

In December 2021, students from seven high schools got the opportunity to get together in the first of our online Equalities Seed Events for secondary students.

The aims of the event were to:

- Share ideas and inspire young people who are actively taking a lead in Pupil Equalities Groups
- Explore what further support the young people need
- Hear ideas for a larger young people's equalities event later in the session

Secondary School Equality Coordinators were invited to nominate two young people per school with the numbers capped at 20 for this initial event. Seven schools took part in the event: Boroughmuir HS, Castlebrae HS, Craigroyston HS, Currie HS, Firrhill HS, Holy Rood HS and Leith Academy. Three schools were selected to give a presentation about their equalities work, resulting in high quality contributions that highlighted the dedication, passion and commitment of the Pupil Equality Groups. Currie HS, Leith Academy and Holy Rood HS students gave thought-provoking presentations that led to fruitful discussions in break-out groups. We would like to take this opportunity to share some highlights of the event.

Leith Academy's goal for their Equalities Ambassador programme.



Goal

- The main goal of the Equalities Ambassador program is to make our school a better place. We aim to let other students know that there are people that care about them, there are people that want to listen, help them, guide them as well as make them feel safe.



A sample of Holy Rood's activities from Black History Month.

Black History Month Celebrations

Equalities Committee:

- 'Show Racism the Red Card'
- Fundraising and awareness – non-uniform day
- School Community wore something Red
- Posters and displays - £465.00 raised for anti-racism



Next Steps

- Equalities Posters with QR codes
- Anonymous referrals – support reporting

Young Persons' Equalities Seed Event



Currie HS pupils showing their commitment to anti-racism.

Social Media

On Facebook

Inspired Youth [Inspired Youth - Home | Facebook](#)

A social enterprise embracing the power of coproduction to create experiential driven arts and media campaigns that inform, challenge, educate and inspire. Highlight : HUMAN The voice of Young travellers.

On Twitter:

Debra Kidd Debra Kidd #Antiracist Teacher, Doctor, Trainer, Author - latest 'A Curriculum of Hope'. Blog: <http://debra-kidd.com>

Debora Kayembe @DKAYEMBE 54th Rector of the University of Edinburgh/ Human Rights Lawyer- Linguist and Political activist



Update from [STEP](#)

Providing Flexible Learning for Travelling Communities

Over the past two years we've all had to adapt to new ways of working due to the pandemic, which hit the travelling communities and all of our work particularly hard. Given that pre-2020 ways of meeting, training and learning are unlikely to return STEP have developed a new programme that will hopefully meet some of the professional learning needs of school staff. All members and authorities can get involved in any aspects of the programme. They are described briefly in three strands below: Participate, Connect, Learn. For more detail on this see the [STEP website](#).

Participate

STEP begin 2022 by developing their two community-based programmes. The main programme, [STEP Starter Sacks](#) is for families with pre-school children and has been piloted in Tayside. STEP are delighted that Aberdeenshire has just recently come on board too. Their second programme involves young people in producing a multimedia Transitions Toolkit to support others from the Gypsy/Traveller community and those who work with them. They will share more detail on how to get involved at the first TENET meeting.



Connect

STEP's TENET and Digital Teachers programmes fall under the *Connect* banner. The idea is to support each other and connect through networks, real and virtual. The TENET network will now be for all those involved in teaching and learning with travelling communities – both in schools and in the community.

Learn

This strand covers learning for young people, families and also for you. STEP can offer group training in your area or online but also sessions for your own personal professional development, led by a range of speakers. The first seminar will be on 31st March at 11am and shares some of the findings from their own research using digital media with young people. The Learn strand also includes support sessions and one-to-one learning for young people led by STEP's new Digital Teacher who you will meet at the first TENET meeting. More details and a programme for young people will follow when the teacher is in post.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
The Moray House
School of Education



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Supporting children and young people to discuss and process the Russia – Ukraine conflict

We are all aware of the situation of the Ukraine - Russia conflict. While this crisis continues to evolve, we know that children and young people may have questions and experience a whole host of emotions from being scared, anxious and guilty to helpless and powerless. We have developed and curated some resources to support discussion with children in school. These discussion templates and web links to additional resources are available on the equalities tile. Feel free to use and share widely.

[Critical World Events Guidance](#)