

Diversity in science

This issue of *Primary Science* is, for me, a really key one. The focus on diversity is something that should be on all of our agendas as teachers and educators.

We are increasingly working with children from diverse backgrounds, home lives, cultures and abilities and in order to support them fully we have to acknowledge that differences exist.

Sometimes we believe that avoiding acknowledging someone's ethnic background or sexuality is the 'right' thing to do – not to draw attention to it, not to be seen to be differentiating. In reality, that is a privileged position. I think that sometimes this arises from a concern not to offend: I don't know whether I should use BAME or person of colour; do I talk about gender or sex? I know there are times I am fearful of getting it wrong so instead say nothing.

Protected characteristics are there for a reason. It is not the world gone soft; it is not that we are all too politically correct nowadays.

We should respect people as individuals and allow engagement that demonstrates respect for values and backgrounds.

This issue contains a number of articles that we hope will make you think. Some consider how we can engage learners through role models. For example, we meet Abi Reader, a woman farmer who has excelled in her area of expertise, and we hear from Kulvinder Johal about her experiences of being a teacher and a person of colour and what this has meant for her. There are articles describing how, as teachers, we can use examples of scientists who provide positive role models and are not white and male. There is a focus on a recent publication by Millgate

House, *Superhero scientists*, which provides practical and accessible ways into challenging stereotypes within the classroom. In the final article of this issue, David Church considers the importance of recognising LGBT+ diversity in the classroom and how to do this in a science-teaching context. He was invited to write this article after his

presentation at a conference, which highlighted just how marginalised this community are in many schools.

As you read the articles, I would like you to do as I did when editing them: challenge yourself. Really think about the extent to which you are drawing upon diverse examples within your teaching. Consider whether you are opening up discussion rather than hiding behind a fear of getting it wrong – with both learners and colleagues. Ask yourself whether you can use science as a context to support learners in seeing that science is for them by introducing role models that 'speak to' your class.

This is not an easy topic, as I

mentioned, and is predominantly shrouded by worry. Only by opening up the conversation, however, will we move things forward and, in terms of forming genuinely cohesive communities in society rather than perpetuating segregation, we need to start the process with primary-age children.

I understand that some teachers might think it is not their job to educate pupils about diversity. Is it a step beyond the remit of the classroom? I would argue not; rather one of the moral duties we have as teachers is to enable our learners to function in a society that embraces and respects difference, rather than devaluing or simply tolerating it.

Leigh Hoath

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