

# A PARENTS' GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AT HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL



## Holy Family Catholic School

Resources, Activities, and Tips for our Families to empower  
our children to work towards equality and diversity.



At Holy Family Catholic School, we recognise diversity within and beyond the parish community that we serve by promoting equality and tackling any form of discrimination. We strive to make the world a better place by recognising and celebrating the uniqueness in each person, and by enabling children and adults to achieve their full potential. God made each of us in his likeness and calls us all to witness the Gospel through our words and actions.

This booklet has been created in response to the events that occurred in 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement. Holy Family Catholic School created a Diversity Team in the Summer of 2020. This team of senior leaders, teachers, governors and parents met regularly to work towards championing equality and diversity in our school and parish community. This booklet has been created to support parents who want to talk about these issues at home with their children.

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### Our Diversity Team



**Joseph Nneke**

*Parent*



**Kieron Niles**

*Parent*



**Pauline D'Cunha**

*Governor*



**Rose Maini**

*Class Teacher*



**Louise Hume**

*Assistant Head Teacher*



**Clare Doyle**

*Deputy Head Teacher*



**Sara Benn**

*Head Teacher*

## A quick introduction

The summer of 2020 saw movements advocating for an end to racial inequality on a mass scale. Yet, current affairs aren't always tangible or immediately clear, especially from a child's perspective. Many children may have questions about the images, stories, and conversations they hear on the news and around them. At school, we regularly discuss how we can apply our faith to our everyday lives as Christians - committed to social justice. As parents, if we haven't already, it is also our responsibility to engage in positive and open discussions about race and racism, equality and diversity, with our children at home.



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Perhaps race, equality and diversity have always been topics of regular discussion in your family, or perhaps you feel unsure about how to approach these topics with your family. Perhaps you grew up never talking about race, equality, diversity, or perhaps you regularly face discrimination. This guide aims to provide resources, advice, and tips to ensure that our children are aware of inequality, unfairness, and problems present in society, as well as share tools and knowledge in which to combat racism and inequality today. Racism, race, equality and diversity are not a one-conversation topic, and our guide by no means contains all the answers. We simply hope to provide the foundations of good places to start to inspire discussion and empower families to engage in conversations about racial equality.

*'There is a time to be silent  
and a time to speak.'*

**Ecclesiastes 3:7**

## What is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement?

In 2012, 17-year old African - American Trayvon Martin was killed by a member of neighbourhood watch, George Zimmerman. The police told Zimmerman not to pursue Trayvon for looking suspicious, but he didn't listen and fatally shot him. There was a lot of racial bias during the trial and Zimmerman was acquitted for the crime. In response, Black Lives Matter movement was formed.

The movement seeks to protest against racially motivated violence inflicted on Black communities, and create a safe space for Black communities, imagination, and innovation. It speaks out against the inequality experienced by some people, and unaccountability, not solely with regard to George Floyd, but also Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the thousands of victims treated unfairly. Whilst it is not a new movement, its message is central to the present anti-racist movement. The statement "Black Lives Matter" refers to a Twitter hashtag, an anthem, a slogan, a social movement, or movements and groupings for racial justice. It has grown to become a global movement - an international human rights movement - to combat racism in society.

### But how do we explain this to our children?

When we explain BLM to children, we're not saying that nobody else matters. However, by encouraging 'all lives matter' as parents we risk taking away the real difficulty felt by Black communities. There are child-friendly analogies to help children understand Black Lives Matter:

- 1. Imagine if you broke your leg and had to go to the Doctor. You would want to tell the Doctor that right now, your leg was in pain. Whilst ALL your bones matter, right now, it's your leg that needs attention.*
- 2. Imagine you were running a race to raise money at a cancer fundraiser, and someone said to you 'But don't all diseases matter?' Of course they do, but right now, it's cancer that needs funding.*

## **How do I explain George Floyd to my children?**

Perhaps, prior to the death of George Floyd, you viewed racism as something 'of the past' or 'something that doesn't happen here'. When talking about the tragedy of George Floyd and similar incidents, it's important to emphasise that racism hasn't suddenly appeared from nowhere.

### **For younger children:**

Explaining the events of summer 2020 can be made comprehensible through a child-friendly lens. How would your child feel if their friend said something mean to them or pushed them because of something they couldn't control? What if they then did it again, even after he/she asked them to stop? And then again, and no one at school helped them? Eventually, they would feel upset and angry. In some ways, this is like the George Floyd tragedy.

Incidents of bad behaviour and mistreatment have happened regularly for decades, and no matter how many times people said 'stop' or asked for help. Now all races are coming together to put an end to racism in our society. It is our responsibility as Catholics, to contribute to the common good and promote social justice.

Younger children may find it difficult to understand inequality and social injustice, so it's important to explain that while everyone should be kind and helpful, this is not always the case, linking it to the notion of 'fairness.' This can also be a good time to teach our children about prejudice and that we should never judge a person's character by their physical appearance. Often in our society, there are presumptions of what a 'dangerous' person looks like, which has fuelled many of these acts of inequality and social injustice. We should remind our children that someone with a skin colour different to their own should not be associated with negative characteristics such as being dangerous or unkind, and that we should never judge a book by its cover.

## How do I open a conversation with my children on race and racism?

For some families, discussions on race and racial inequality may feel like fairly new territory. It can be easy to get used to not thinking about racial identity if it doesn't personally impact us negatively during everyday life.

Racial identity is really difficult to get right especially with people we don't know very well. People should be identified in the way they identify themselves, and we can only know this by asking someone.

The events of Summer 2020 have emphasised that parents and caregivers play an integral role in ensuring that all children have an awareness of white privilege and racial bias present in society and the ways in which we can combat racism. It's quite natural to feel uncomfortable as a parent when engaging in such discussions, especially when it's not a topic that you're used to talking about.

As Ijeoma Oluo, the author of "So You Want to Talk About Race" tells us:

*"If you're white, and you don't want to feel any of that pain by having these conversations, then you are asking people of colour to continue to bear the entire burden of racism alone."*



Often, we are so afraid of saying the 'wrong thing' that we don't engage at all. As a consequence, our children don't learn about the racism that exists today, how to be open to criticism or how to reshape their views. We can also make an active effort to encourage discussion on race. Invite children to actively see colour, to see culture, to see history, and to acknowledge that race has an impact on people's life experiences. So how can we best do this and what can we say?

*'Judge not, that you be not judged.'* **Matthew 7:1**

## Younger children:

Explaining recent events and the deep complexities racism pose are understandably difficult to approach with younger children. How do we explain race and the racism that exists today in an age-appropriate manner? A good first step is to frame race and its present inequalities through the lens of how a child experiences the world, such as 'fairness.' From an early age, we hear our children say 'it's not fair.' Highlighting examples of situations that 'are not fair' and 'are fair' is a tangible lens in which young children are able to better understand racial injustice.



For example:

*"If we went to the shop and I gave your little sister 5 sweets and only gave you 1, how would that make you feel?"*

*"If you were hungry and I made dinner for everyone but didn't give you any, do you think that is fair?"*

*"If you did something wrong and I punish you by taking away your favourite toy and your sister did the same thing and I gave her a treat... do you think that's fair?"*

Use simple language and make it clear that you feel everyone should be treated fairly. Personalising your explanation will help make it more tangible, and if you can relate the discussion either to yourselves, your children's friends or your own family members and friends, it can help to bring these topics closer to home to highlight their importance. Have they witnessed racism or ever been mean to someone with different skin colour? Do they notice anything in school that they think is unfair? Children absorb their surroundings from a young age, therefore as parents, we can also actively expose our children to diverse books, films, cartoons, and music to ensure our children do not associate influential heroes, the most 'beautiful' princesses, or the loudest voices as solely white. Some examples can be found in the educational resource section of our guide.

## What is a social construct?

A social construct is a perception of something based on the collective views within society as opposed to existing naturally. Race is a social construct - a set of ideas created within a particular culture that guides people's thoughts and actions. The social construct of race teaches some members of society to see and treat certain groups of people in certain ways.



*'Show respect for all people.'* | **Peter 2:17**



Professor Jane Elliott is an American educator and diversity trainer who has carried out some interesting activities with children to explain racism as a social construct. One of her most notable pieces of diversity work is the blue eyes and brown eyes experiment, which can be found on her website.

## How do I explain privilege?

There is an American video that perfectly captures the concept of privilege. A group of people line up to start a race. The referee asks questions, such as 'take two step forwards if you have never helped your parents with bills' and 'if you never wondered where your next meal was coming from.' After 5 or so questions, the race begins, with the runners at very different starting lines. Naturally, those who were able to step closer to the finish line were at a huge advantage. A key message from this video is that these things are not in the individual's control, and did not come from any of the decisions they made. That is privilege.

Here's the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K5fbQI-zps>





When we talk about white privilege we're not saying life isn't sometimes challenging or that hardship doesn't exist in white communities. Rather, when explaining white privilege you're saying that hardships or difficult moments experienced in life are not a result of your skin colour. By highlighting the unfairness in any situation that arises, a child will better understand the difficulties faced by some people today.

*'The Father gives me my people. Every one of them will come to me, and I will always accept them.'* **John 6:37**

It's important to understand, and to explain to our children, that the concept of white privilege is not an attack on white people, but is a reflection of the reality that many communities across the world are affected by. As an individual, we can't eradicate it completely from society as it is deeply ingrained into many of our systems and institutions. However, the biggest first step we can take is to recognise that it exists and then to reflect upon how that impacts ourselves and others in our immediate and wider circles. Understanding the origins and the history of white privilege, which dates back to the colonial era and has continued and evolved throughout more recent history, is equally as important and allows us to identify how we can change our individual actions to uplift those who might not have the same privileges as others.

Useful link on white privilege on Newsround: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52937905>

### **What is white fragility?**

The term white fragility refers to any discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and unfairness. It can sometimes be very difficult to have conversations about race and racism and often we say nothing for fear of saying the wrong thing. It is important to have these conversations during children's formative years to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness such that they promote equality and diversity through their words and actions.

## Exploring the Contributions and Achievements of our Diverse Community

As parents, whilst it is important to acknowledge racism both today and throughout history, it is equally important to celebrate BAME achievements, contributions, and history outside a frame of just struggle.

We can and should recognise the contributions that BAME inventors, scientists and politicians have made towards many of the modern-day amenities that are used everyday, giving them the credit that's well deserved. While Thomas Edison is renowned for inventing the lightbulb, few people know that it was actually an African American inventor, Lewis Latimer, who invented the carbon filament that allows the bulb to function. Other inventions which were pioneered or greatly improved by Black inventors include the three-light traffic light system (Garrett Morgan, 1923), refrigerated trucks (Frederick McKinley Jones, 1940) and the first colour PC monitor (Mark Dean, 1980).

At Holy Family we believe it is important that, through the curriculum we teach, children see themselves mirrored in the people that they are learning about.

*'My brothers and sisters, I myself feel sure that you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.'* **Romans 15:14**



We want them to see how people of all races and cultures have contributed to the world we live in and made positive impacts through all walks of life. No matter what background a child comes from, we want them to believe that they are capable of achieving great things and to be proud to celebrate their diverse backgrounds. Throughout their time at Holy Family we want them to know and understand the advantages that living in a diverse community brings to all aspects of our lives.

The ethnic heritage and contributions of our communities is something valuable that's worth exploring and helps us to acknowledge that they are multidimensional, beautiful and inspirational with many positive elements.

As well as this we can expose our children to different cuisines, different BAME authors, musicians, artists and cultural traditions which help our children celebrate the diversity around them. Holy Family Parish's social events are a good local example of celebrating diversity.

### **Home, School, Parish Partnership**

The diversity of our school community is reflected in our parish community. Holy Family Parish is inclusive in their ministries. Our parish embraces and celebrates the cultural diversity of the whole parish community. By working together in partnership (home, school and parish) we seek to enable every child to become the best version possible of the person God intended them to be. Children leave our school knowing that they are valued, understanding social justice and their role in making the world a better place for everyone.



## Promoting Allyship in Our Children

Allyship is part of being a good friend. There is plenty our children can do to ensure that school, playgrounds, and activities are inclusive and welcoming to all. Even if we think our children wouldn't personally engage in racist behaviour, there are still things we can do to help. Encouraging our children to speak up and stand up to racism is not asking our children to fully understand exactly what it feels like to be a person of colour. Rather as parents we should be helping them to understand allyship is a life long process of listening, reflecting and acting. There is no allyship without action.

### Working towards Allyship:

- Allyship is not about who we are but what we choose to do in every space and every interaction.
- Be brave enough to speak out against unfairness, even when you feel scared.
- Acknowledge that while you too have challenges, the conversation is not about you.
- Understand we are all human, we all make mistakes.

As our children grow up, we should be encouraging them to be open to listening, to be willing to own their mistakes and be prepared to alter their behaviour as many times as necessary. As parents, we should encourage our children to speak out against unfairness, be proactive learners and increase awareness of conscious and unconscious bias. Inspire our children to be brave and speak out to their teachers, their friends, their parents, and figures of authority in cases of unfairness. Encourage them to be curious and to be more aware of the impact of every interaction inside and outside school.





Whilst it's not always easy, as parents we should try to acknowledge and be aware of our own implicit bias. Take note of our gestures, how we look at people, and how we interact with people. Small changes such as these go a long way.

### **Being a role model through action**

Perhaps one of the biggest takeaways from our guide is to underscore that changing attitudes towards race starts at home. Once we as parents understand anti-racism ourselves, we are then able to lead by example to our children.

Being open to change and examination is a powerful lesson, helping our children to live their lives in line with Jesus' teaching. Actions often speak louder than words, and our children mirror how we act in day-to-day life. From a young age children take note of our actions, meaning that if you open discussion on race at home, yet treat people differently in view of their race, our children are likely to adopt similar behaviour.

*'The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,  
a stronghold in times of trouble.'*

**Psalm 9:9-10**

## **GLOSSARY**

### **Allyship**

*People not of the BAME community who empathise and verbalise their understanding to impact necessary change providing support to the BAME community.*

### **Implicit bias (Sometimes called Unconscious Bias)**

*'Implicit bias' is a term used to describe when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge.*

### **Prejudice**

*Prejudgment about another person based on the social groups to which that person belongs. This consists of thoughts and feelings, including stereotypes, attitudes and generalisations that are based on little or no experience and then are projected onto everyone from that group.*

### **Discrimination**

*Action (conscious or unconscious) based on prejudice or treating an individual in a less favourable way for various reasons such as gender, race, disability. Discrimination may appear in many different forms: it could be direct or indirect, harassment or victimisation.*

### **Social construct**

*A social construct is a perception of something based on the collective views within society.*

*E.g. 'Black' is a social construct - no one actually has skin the colour black. People of colour might have skin that is light brown or dark brown.*

## HFCS Diversity Statement

At Holy Family Catholic School, we recognise diversity within and beyond the parish community that we serve by promoting equality and tackling any form of discrimination. We strive to make the world a better place by recognising and celebrating the uniqueness in each person - made in God's image - enabling children and adults to achieve their full potential.

In our endeavour to achieve this, we will:

- *Prepare children for a life of faith in a culturally diverse society, where children are confident in understanding their commitment to social justice and the common good*
- *Ensure our curriculum reflects and celebrates the diversity of our school and parish community*
- *Ensure all school policies and practices explicitly reflect our diverse community*
- *Encourage candidates from diverse backgrounds to apply to work at HFCS, and to create an enabling environment which encourages BAME staff to further develop their leadership skills*
- *Welcome and value contributions from families, including questions or comments which will enable our school to further promote equality and diversity in all areas of school life*



## **A selection of educational resources for you and your family (please look beyond this list as well):**

Younger children:

### **Grace Byers: I am enough (Age 3-8)**

- A child-friendly simple picture book that reminds us to love ourselves for who we are, to be kind and to respect others.

### **Innosanto Nagara: A is for Activist (I+)**

- An ABC book packed with definitions and eye-catching pictures that help children engage in and understand activism.

### **Ann Hazzard: Something Happened In Our Town (age 4-8)**

- The story of a white family and a black family as they explore a police shooting of a Black man in their town. The book aims to help children understand and identify racial injustice and help answer questions on the nature of traumatic events.

### **Matthew Cherry: Hair Love**

- A short book and film that narrates an African-American father's relationship with his daughter and styling her hair. The book encourages love and mainstream exposure to people of colour's hair.

### **Cobzi A. Cabrera: My Hair is a Garden**

- Mackenzie is upset about mean comments about her hair. We follow her story as she learns to love her hair with the help of her neighbour Miss Tillie. Using her garden as a metaphor Mackenzie learns not to fear her hair but to see it as beautiful.

### **Vashti Harrison: Little Leaders: Bold Women In Black History (Age 7-10)**

- An illustrated history book of the stories of amazing Black women in history and their achievements.

### **Andrea Davis Pinkey: Let it Shine (ages 5-9)**

- An illustrated story of Black women doing amazing acts in history, speaking out against racism and oppression.

### **Fran Manushkin Happy in our Skin (Age 2+)**

- A book to teach kids about diversity. The illustrations feature children with different skin colours, glasses, freckles, unibrows, wheelchairs, and birthmarks to help encourage the beauty of diversity.

### **Ilyasah Shabazz: Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up To Be Malcolm X (Age 5-10)**

- The childhood story of one of the most influential Black American men, Malcolm X, written by his daughter.

### **Ibtihaj Muhammad: The Proudest Blue (Age 4-7)**

- A beautiful story of being proud of your identity. In the face of hurtful words, Faizah finds the way to be proud of her bright blue hijab.

### **Jacqueline Woodson: The Day You Begin (Age 4-7)**

- The story of finding the courage and bravery to be different and connect with people when you feel alone or when "no one is quite like you."



**Films:** Younger children/family

**Hidden Figures (PG)**

*Based on the true story of three mathematicians in the 1960s - Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson. This film portrays how these three women overcame race and gender obstacles and become key members of NASA.*

**The Pursuit of Happiness (I 2A)**

*Based on a true story of a father-son family the film follows a father and son rise from the bottom rung of the ladder in 1980s San Francisco.*

**Holy Family Catholic School's Diversity and Equality Booklet is based on a booklet called 'A Parents Guide to Black Lives Matter' originally written by Lily Pryer and Francesca Chong.**

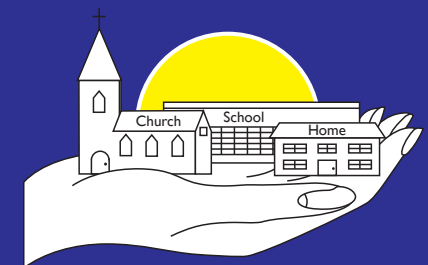
*The school leaders involved in this project thank Kieran, Joseph and Rose for playing a key role in making this booklet happen. We also thank every member of our school community who suggested resources or contributed ideas. Together, we shape the culture, the ethos and the vision of our school. This is a path we have to travel. It will require us to explore issues of identity and integrity and what they truly mean in the context of our school. It may require us to have difficult conversations and face uncomfortable truths. This only confirms there is work to be done as we journey towards positive change.*

**Holy Family Catholic School Mission Statement:**

*'Trying to make the world a better place through creating a learning environment based on Gospel values where all children and adults become better people.'*

**Holy Family Catholic School Vision Statement:**

*'Holy Family School is a school where everyone is valued, inspired and challenged.'*



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*'When you talk, do not say harmful things.  
But say what people need - words that  
will help others become stronger.'*

**Ephesians 4:29**



*'We are pressed on every side  
by troubles, but we are not  
crushed.'*

**2 Corinthians 4:8**



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*'Finally, all of you should live together in peace.'* **1 Peter 3:8**





**Holy Family Catholic School**

High Street, Langley, SL3 8NF

**Telephone: 01753 541442**

[www.holyfamilycatholicschool.org.uk](http://www.holyfamilycatholicschool.org.uk) • [school.admin@hfcs.org.uk](mailto:school.admin@hfcs.org.uk)