**Round Table Talk Part 3**

*“parents, is discrimination in primary schools real? If so, what are the possible solutions for that?”.*

The three round tables have allowed parents to voice their thoughts and experiences around the topic of diversity and inclusion. This has allowed the collating of information so that we can make schools aware of the neglection of black children’s needs.

We have had 3 round tables discussing diversity and inclusion in primary schools. They consisted of over 30 parents who have had children in both State and Independent schools. Each round table entailed deep and personal stories from parents and expressed their concern for black children being mistreated within schools.

The last round table provided a summary of all the round tables. It concludes the topic of diversity and inclusion in primary schools, but it opens a chapter of possible solutions that can be taken on board. Again, this round table was based on two questions which allowed parents to share their thoughts and led to thought-provoking discussions.

Question 1

The first question allowed parents to share their thoughts on whether they thought discrimination in primary schools is existent.

Body

There was a consistent theme amongst the parents, they mentioned that their children would tell them cruel comments their classmates made within the classroom. Some parents said their children’s skin colour was called “poo poo” by other classmates. Other parents said their daughters would constantly question, “mummy why don’t I have straight hair?” or “why are angels always white, why aren’t there any black angels?”.

Many parents felt that black children are often neglected by teachers. For instance, when they have problem, teachers tend to ignore them and are dismissive towards them. Some parents acknowledged the fact that teachers ignore the academic aspect of black children when talking about them to their parents. The teachers would say “she is brilliant in music lessons” or “he is very competitive, which makes him great at sports”, ignoring the academic aspect. Consequently, black children cannot benefit the most from schools, because the teachers do not push them to their potential academically.

To add on, parents also mentioned that teachers tend to label their children as “disruptive and loud”. Considering this argument, some pointed to the fact that children are naturally curious and will challenge things, it is up to the teachers to handle them in a way that will not exclude black children. Parents believed that when teachers label black children early, they begin to act that way.

Conclusion

There was an agreement amongst the parents that teachers should not generalise all black children or put them in a single box. Teachers need to treat black children for who they, and not assume that they will all act similarly. Some parents argued that parents have a lot of work to do to help teachers understand our cultural background and ensure classrooms are a safe learning environment for their kids.

Question 2

The second question focused on the possible solutions to combat discrimination within primary schools.

Body

Majority of the parents agreed that black parents need to put themselves forward to help educate children and teachers about African culture. Parents need to make themselves visible in the school and communicate face to face with teachers. There was an argument from some parents that teachers lack cultural sensitivity, they need to ask African parents to come to school to teach about their culture. For instance, some questioned that Brazilian mothers teach children their cultural dance, so why can’t an African mother do the same?

Primarily, one of the parents stated that, culture is being diluted for those parents who were born and raised in England, so it is essential to ensure our culture is being taught to our children. Others argued that as we are a minority in most schools, parents need to be involved in everything apart from academics.

Although majority of the parents agreed that parents have an essential role in promoting more inclusion within schools, some argued that schools need to take on responsibility as well. For instance, some recommended diversity and inclusion should be incorporated in the curriculum not just in the school itself. This would entail having books in the library’s about African cultures and information about different nations in Africa. Additionally, others suggested a network should be built to teach children about different faces of poverty because poverty is everywhere, not just in Africa.

Conclusion

Overall, the three round tables have discussed whether there is diversity and inclusion within primary schools. It has involved insightful, interesting and somewhat devasting and shocking stories from parents regarding their children. It has opened our eyes into the need for cultural reform within primary schools and the extent of change that needs to take place.

Additionally, there has been a consistent theme of the role of black parents in promoting diversity and inclusion within primary schools. This also includes, parents ensuring their children can identify with their culture by showing them that their culture is something to be proud of. Also, there was a recognition that black parents need to be more involved within schools to ensure that black children can gain the best out of their schools.

The round tables have shown the painful and traumatising experiences black children can go through at such a young age. However, it also showed that there is hope for change if the black community can stand united.