RLT ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION 2021

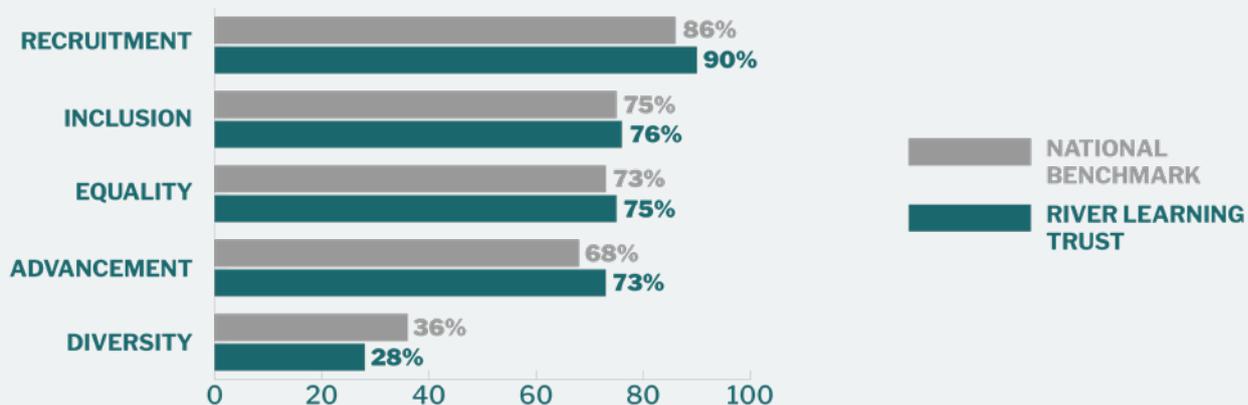This is our first Annual Report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Trust Board approved an EDI Strategic Plan in October 2020, which consists of 3 main threads: Education, Governance and People. The Board established a steering group and there is a working party for each of the main threads, led by a member of SLT with membership drawn from across Trust Schools.

The Board reviewed its EDI Statement and published this on the website together with supporting materials. The EDI statement makes a public commitment to report on the work we have undertaken each year to move forward with our EDI Strategic plan.

During the year, we partnered with Edurio to carry out an EDI survey across all RT schools and the Central Team. The survey was completed by 783 respondents. Each school received their individual results and are now being supported to develop feedback from the surveys into Equality Action Plans.

In the majority of areas, the quantitative data shows the Trust as a whole and the majority of the individual schools, are performing above the national benchmark. However, there is a disparity between the best performing and lower performing schools.

Positive Responses Difference from the National Benchmark:

	National Benchmark	River Learning Trust
RECRUITMENT	86%	90%
INCLUSION	75%	76%
EQUALITY	73%	75%
ADVANCEMENT	68%	73%
DIVERSITY	36%	28%

Responses to each of these areas varied across school settings so whilst in total we benchmark well, across some of the indicators the responses are variable. Clearly, the area where we are well below benchmark is diversity:

> *Diversity in particular not readily evident - a more diverse staff would not only lead to a healthier work environment for staff but would also encourage a wider school community and pupil mix*

What's going well?

There is a perception amongst a large number of staff that the River Learning Trust and the schools within the Trust largely have a welcoming and inclusive ethos or culture, where people are valued, respected and treated equally. Many respondents commented on how supportive staff are and how SLT listen and are receptive to suggestions for change.

> *There is a constant underlying message that we are a community where all staff are valued. This is really noticeable as it wasn't the case in the past.*

Schools were also recognised as having an inclusive curriculum, strong PSHE work and excellent support for students in place. Many of the schools throughout the Trust are engaging with excellent equality initiatives. Individual schools were highlighted for their work on recognising individual pupil's needs and creating adaptations to ensure inclusivity, work on LGBT+ equality and inclusion and support of pupils with SEND.

> *A coherent RSE curriculum with CPD, which is visible in other aspects of school life, such as assemblies and the school values. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are reflected in other curriculum areas (English and History springing to mind, where there are explicit sessions exploring these and book choices are made with diversity and inclusion being considered).*

Even Better If

Diversity was increased within the staff teams: Whilst the Trust scored highly on perceptions of fair recruitment, nearly across the board, diversity was raised as a key area for improvement, recognising that inequalities may not always be obvious and that there are often multiple challenges to addressing this issue.

Training: Throughout the survey, staff reference a strong need for more training opportunities on equality, diversity and inclusion, to upskill staff to have these conversations with students, and to increase awareness and understanding of these issues.

EDI was embedded throughout the curriculum in all schools: Some participants have highlighted that they are doing some excellent work in diversifying the curriculum; ensuring representation and diverse resources; and having open conversations with young people about equality, diversity and inclusion. However, we know we have more to do to ensure we have fully embedded this across all RLT schools.

Clear communications as to what the Trust/school leadership is doing to effect change: We have committed to publishing an Annual Report to all stakeholders, including staff, together with our published EDI statement on our website.

Clear and consistent policies and procedures, and monitoring data was collected and utilised effectively across the Trust: We will carry out an end to end review of policy and procedure over the next year, with the benefit of some independent external advice.

Other actions

During the year we also partnered with a specialist provider to deliver unconscious bias training to staff in schools and training for Senior Leaders. We also deliver training for over 60 governors on promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Schools – Understanding Governors' Duties.

In relation to curriculum, the English curriculum at KS3 has been externally reviewed by an expert from Oxford University, with bespoke feedback to each school and change introduced in key areas.

In some instances, this has led to the introduction of a more diverse range of texts, and in others the emphasis has been on improved teaching of and sensitivity towards diversity issues within current units.

Other subject areas have made similar changes – particularly history. However, the centre-assessed grades issue in particular has demanded much from our subject leaders, and it is likely that this work has been more consistent and impactful in some schools than in others.

Therefore, a key task for term 1 is to audit the changes and current content of our curriculum in subjects other than in English, and to use this to help us develop and refine the offer in all of our schools.

In addition to this, there were a multitude of individual projects carried out in schools, a few of which are highlighted here:

Student Voice:
Chipping Norton School has been developing something we've called our 'Sixth Sense'. Six times per year we meet the same one sixth of our students to carry out some student voice / focus group surveys. 29 staff are involved and each one of us meets the same 4 or 5 students each time; thus building the rapport / trust. We explore various elements of in-school and out-of-school life; including where they feel safe and unsafe. We have skewed the focus towards our most vulnerable students with the goal of remaining sensitive to how CNS feels and is for those students who may be at greatest risk of not feeling like they belong. It's a very ambitious but manageable programme.

Equally safe:
All RLT secondary schools have been working with a specialist on a DfE backed and funded programme designed to make a difference in the quality of our equalities-focused anti-bullying work in schools. Nominating two representatives from each school, so far they have attended sessions on a whole-school approach to anti-bullying and tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. The programme runs to the end of the academic year.

Diversity in Art at Tower Hill:
The Art lead for Tower Hill School ran a really thought provoking session on an Inset Day challenging colleagues to think more broadly about the need to broaden representation in art – both in terms of subject matter but also chosen featured artists. The aim was to ensure artists are relevant to the topic and lesson whilst increasing the diversity of artists studied.

Professional Collaborative Conversation:
The Headteacher at Horspath linked other Headteachers into her research project "Black history and black under-achievement" which was presented back to a group of Primary Headteachers both as research findings and resources to improve elements of the Primary curriculum.

Next Steps

Whilst we have already covered a lot of ground, we have more work to do. Our areas of focus for the coming year include:

- Developing a blueprint for training standards and content across RLT schools
- Roll out and training on our whole school script
- Bespoke training and support for writing Equality Objectives
- Review of recruitment practices with a view to increasing diversity of staff
- Review of policy and procedure