

# Minority ethnic representation in education

**The implications of Canon Ivor Smith-Cameron's letter to *The Bridge* last month about minority ethnic representation in education are seriously misleading.**

First, let us make it quite clear that it is entirely appropriate and necessary to be raising the

**The Rt Rev. Dr Richard Cheetham, Bishop of Kingston, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education and Ms Beverley Fraser, Vice-Chair, respond to Canon Ivor Smith-Cameron's letter in May Bridge.**

questions about minority ethnic representation at every level of the diocese, through MEAC, and also in the work of the Board of Education. These questions are asked regularly and systematically. Therefore, the pointing out of the fact that there was no person from minority ethnic groups in a presentation to Diocesan Synod is perfectly valid.

This point was raised by a number of synod members and we have not lost sight of the lesson to be learned from the experience.

The presentation did not aim to give an overview of the whole work of the Board. It centred on the very valuable and important work being done in HE and FE, often by those working as volunteers as well as by stipendiary chaplains. This is an area of work the Board is keen to develop, and part of this will be to encourage more participation from those from

minority ethnic groups.

With regard to Saint Cecilia's Wandsworth, Church of England School staffing situation, it is important to point out that these are very early days in the existence of the school, and the teaching staff numbers are extremely small. As the staff grows, there is every expectation that minority ethnic representation will also grow. In fact, since the March Synod there is now such a member of the teaching staff.

What is grossly unfair about the letter is the implication that the Director of Education is or has been in any way complacent

about these matters. Nothing could be further from the truth. A very considerable amount of work has been undertaken on the Board's behalf by the Director and her staff. Detailed reports have been presented to the Board of Education by the Director on ethnic minority representation over the last three years, since the Bishop's enquiry into institutional racism.

The Board received a very thorough progress report from the Director at its meeting on 13 March 2003. Part of that report was a recognition that this work is developing and

ongoing. It was most certainly not complacent in any sense about these important matters.

Moreover, the Board's involvement in race equality issues goes back many years. We were the first diocese to provide guidance for Church schools on combating racism in 1994.

This was at the current Director of Education's instigation. Linda Borthwick has been a dedicated and extremely able Director of Education and servant of the Board and this Diocese for many years, and such misrepresentation of her position is quite unacceptable. It is also counterproductive to the very issues of racial equality which Canon Smith-Cameron is trying to promote and to which the Board is also committed.

## MORE LETTERS

### Anne Williamson

The wife of Bishop Roy, the former Bishop of Southwark, has died and her funeral, held in Beeston Notts to which Bishop Roy and Anne retired was attended by a number of Southwark people past and present. Among them were Bishop Tom, Bishop Martin Wharton, Bishop Peter Hall and the Very Rev. Colin Slee.

**Here Bishop Colin Buchanan, who preached at her funeral, remembers her:**

Mrs Anne Williamson died on 11 May, three and three-quarter years after cancer was first diagnosed and she went for an emergency operation.

She died in great peace, at home, and with her family of three generations around her. She had known for at least nine months that she was gently moving towards such a death, and was totally open about it, typically setting all visitors at ease, and ministering to them, both from her wonderful humour and from her profound love of Christ. Bishop Roy has been with her almost day and night with rare breaks all those nine months, and has devoted his life totally to her care, thus enabling her to remain at home and to die there as she had wished, and to die well as was integral to her discipleship.

In fact, she had been told it would be amazing if she survived till Christmas, but, when that was behind her, she then had her eyes set on Andrew's wedding in April. And so she lived till then! He

got married 150 miles away, but she had a celebration to which the neighbours in Nottingham came, and I suspect that, when that had happened, she simply said 'Lord, I'll come now' - and went.

Anne was a few weeks older than Roy. They went to the same school in Belfast, both got converted in the same mission as teenagers, married young and had five children. He was first of all a London City Missioner, and then, when past 30, went on an 'older man's essay course' for ordination.

Anne was always sustaining the home, with a wonderful gift for being all that her children needed (she was a smashing mum), and yet unstintingly hospitable to guests, strangers and gentlemen of the road.

Her humour, unflappability, readiness to smile at trouble, and love for all, were tremendous.

With one income and five children money was never easy, but she both managed on a shoestring on the hand, and never abated her generosity on the other.

I first visited their home in a nine-bedroom vicarage in Nottingham in 1970, and saw Anne in seven successive homes in the 34 years that have passed since. I mentioned at her funeral that I had always had difficulty in imagining her as a magistrate, but I was approached in the hall afterwards by another Nottingham (Christian) magistrate, and he told me that not only was she superb in the public dispensing of justice, but 'we have had many and many a laugh behind the scenes'.

care. He told of how she had worked as a volunteer in the Cathedral bookshop and how this had combined the things she loved - meeting people, chatting and shopping.

He painted a wonderful picture of her as a great shopper who seemed always to be just going or just returning from the shops, concluding that when she and Roy retired it was the Asian shopkeeper, near St Leonard's Streatham, church who felt Anne's absence most.

The readings chosen for the Requiem: Proverbs 31:10-31 and John 19:25b-27 expressed



Giving of herself to further voluntary service over and above her ability to give time to everybody in her home was typical of her. At home chaplains and secretaries (who get to know bishops' homes pretty well!) would testify to her consistent witness. Outside it she was not only a magistrate, but learned British Sign Language to be able to minister to a needy and overlooked community.

I suppose there should be a note of very special occasions of using her home for the sake of the kingdom. The outstanding one was the time when all the relatives of the victims of the football stadium fire in Bradford were asked to a quiet and restorative reception at Bishop's House in Heaton. But in South London there must be hundreds and hundreds to rise up and call her blessed. Roy, I know, drew much of his strength for his ministry from the God-given health-giving bonding of his home. I find it extraordinary to think she has gone.

We hold Roy and all the family in our prayers.

the notions of wife and mother that so characterized Anne. Anne, he said, faced her illness in exemplary fashion, refusing to be dragged down by it, 'she was and is a true Christian who faced life and death with equal courage, who lived life to the full, who live life sacrificially, who could both give and receive love, who knew the scriptures, prayed constantly and loved her Lord'.

In conclusion he said 'I feel better for having known her and I suspect you do as well'. Andrew was right. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

**Canon Peter Clark, Chair of Governors, St Celia's Wandsworth, writes:**

**Our Church schools, under the aegis of the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education and the leadership of its Director, deserve every support and encouragement, rather than constant carping criticism.**

As a Governor of three Church schools serving inner-city areas, I know that these are offering a

place of security and stability (as well as education) sadly lacking in the home lives of many of our pupils. They are ministering to a larger and more representative mix of the local community than are many parish churches. They are not elitist, nor middle-class and have a much greater minority ethnic presence than in the local population, as anyone who has visited them will know.

They are immensely popular with parents, and particularly at secondary level, are greatly oversubscribed. (At St Cecilia's Wandsworth - over 1,200 applications for just 150 places this September.)

I am immensely proud of all that is achieved by the Headteachers, staff and pupils of the three Diocesan schools with which I am associated - Christ Church Battersea, St Saviour's and St Olave's Southwark, St Cecilia's Wandsworth. I do not believe that they are in any way untypical of church schools in the Diocese. The Church's role in education in Southwark should be an occasion of praise rather than blame.

In particular, I congratulate Linda Borthwick and her excellent team for their professionalism, support and encouragement to our schools - staff, pupils, Governors and parents.

**Canon Peter Clark, Battersea**

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### Following the Funeral of Anne Williamson, a Requiem was held in Southwark Cathedral on Monday 24 May.

Canon Andrew Nunn the Sub-Dean of Southwark Cathedral and formerly Bishop Roy's Chaplain presided and gave the address.

In his address he spoke of his first meeting with Anne Williamson and how he immediately felt embraced by her warmth and held in her