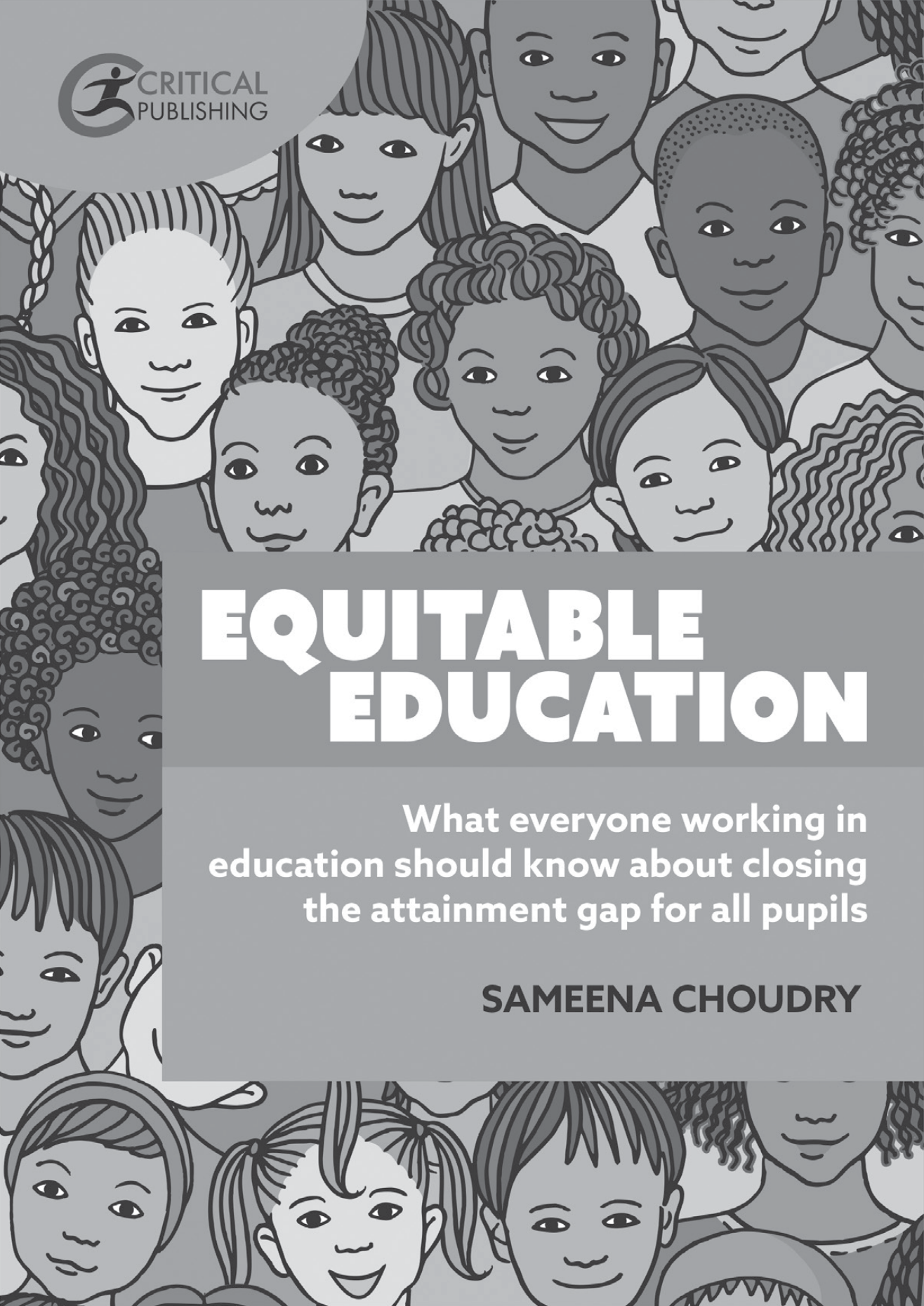

CRITICAL PUBLISHING

EQUITABLE EDUCATION

What everyone working in education should know about closing the attainment gap for all pupils

SAMEENA CHOUDRY

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my late father, Atta Mohammad Choudry, who made tremendous sacrifices so we could succeed and have a better life. Abba jaan, you gave me the courage and confidence to fight for what is fair and challenge inequities throughout my life. You continue to guide me in this endeavour.

It is also dedicated to my late brother, Anwar Ul Haq Choudhry, who effortlessly took on immense family responsibilities at a young age, after our father passed away. Bhai jaan, I miss your love, support, kindness and laughter every living moment.

To my mother, Salima Begum Choudry, whose love and understanding of the importance of education has been instilled in all of us and for generations to come. Without you Ammi jaan, I could not have achieved what I have today.

To my children, Saman and Zeyd, and my husband, Shafiq, for their love and support throughout the writing of this book.

Endorsements

This is a powerful and timely consideration of the ways in which education has the capacity to make a difference. Packed full of evidence-informed strategies, this book considers the range of ways that schools can respond positively to build far greater equity for all. This is an authoritative text that deserves close study by all those genuinely seeking to build a more inclusive society. I recommend this book to teachers, leaders, teacher-educators, inspectors and anyone concerned to move beyond the wringing of hands towards positive transformative action in our schools and colleges. Sameena Choudry's contribution is authoritative and compelling and deserves our full attention.

Dame Alison Peacock
Chief Executive of the Chartered College of Teaching

Occasionally a book comes along that profoundly and eloquently speaks to your heart; this is such a book. For anyone who cares deeply about equity in education this is a must read. This book by Sameena Choudry is simply a tour de force of the evidence around inequity and injustice, it has moral purpose at its core and a belief in success for every child in every page. Principled, passionate, and practical, it is realistic but also optimistic. Choudry puts a white-hot spotlight on the issues but also leaves us with the hope that there is so much more we, as educators, can do. Timely and important.

Professor Alma Harris PhD, FAcSS, FLSW, FRSA
Deputy Head of School, Director of Research and PGT
Swansea University School of Education

In this engaging and inspirational book, Sameena Choudry draws on her massive experience of promoting inclusion and equity in education over many years. Her ideas are both challenging and yet supportive of those in the field who struggle to find ways of responding positively to learner diversity. A particular strength of the book is the way that research findings are combined with the author's professional experience of supporting developments in schools. I have no doubt that her guidance and practical suggestions will be widely welcomed by colleagues in the field.

Mel Ainscow CBE
Emeritus Professor of Education
University of Manchester, UK

Sameena has spent her career being a powerhouse and role model for the importance of education, social justice and breaking down barriers. This book not only shines a light on these important issues but also gives highly actionable, concrete advice for those who want to move the agenda forward. A must read for all who work in education.

Professor Samantha Twiselton, OBE
Director, Sheffield Institute of Education
Vice President (external), Chartered College of Teaching

In an area with more noise than insight, this book delivers a precision of focus, providing practical strategies and guidance for teachers and senior leaders underpinned by research. Never less than engaging, this book is essential reading for those dedicated to addressing inequalities within education.

Professor Damien Page
Dean of School
Carnegie School of Education

This is a highly readable, wide ranging book on the factors contributing to the variation in outcomes for groups of pupils. In laying out the contributing factors of underachievement, summarising the research, providing case studies and prompts for action, it points the way for a truly equitable education for all. Essential reading for every part of the education sector.

Mary Myatt
Education adviser and writer

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Meet the author

Sameena Choudry is the founder of Equitable Education Ltd, an educational consultancy specialising in closing the attainment gaps. She is also co-founder of #WomenEd, a grassroots movement for connecting existing and aspiring women leaders in education. She has been a teacher, lecturer, ITE tutor, examiner, senior leader, adviser and senior officer in four local authorities, and is also a trained Ofsted inspector. She has built on these roles and, through her educational consultancy, worked with hundreds of schools to improve educational outcomes for pupils with specific needs who, with additional support, can and do achieve highly. She has contributed to a number of publications and regularly speaks at educational conferences on issues relating to equality, diversity and social justice.

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Foreword

Sir Tim Brighouse
Professor and Chief Adviser for London Schools,
Department for Education and Skills, 2003–2007

There is nothing more important in education than to achieve equity for all children, especially those who through no fault of their own have the odds stacked against their success. These adverse circumstances may be an accident of being born into families and communities which whether for reasons of race, poverty, violence or ill-health have made make it less likely that they will succeed. Relatively recently we have called some of these more extreme barriers to learning 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' which are followed for some by 'Adverse Adolescent Experiences'.

Over the years, governments of different complexions and with more and less enthusiasm have introduced a range of programmes to improve what they have variously called 'equity', 'equality of opportunity', 'social justice' and, more recently 'social mobility' – all conveying something slightly different but pointing in roughly the same direction.

Some of these initiatives have affected every area of the country according to nationally established criteria. Examples of this approach are legion: Free School Meals for poor children; Statements and later Education Health and Care Plans for those with special educational needs and Disabilities; Sure Start Centres; Education Welfare Allowances for post-16 students; an Additional Education Needs element in the formula for distributing funds to schools; Section 11 funding for many years for children who arrived as immigrants and for whom English was an additional language; and in a most focused way in recent years, the 'pupil premium', which has added significant sums to a school's funding based on the number of pupils who in the previous five years have been eligible for free school meals.

A few others have been 'place'-based. In the late 1960s and early 1970s it took the form of the Education Priority Areas in some cities and urban areas principally in the Midlands and the north of the country. In 1997 Education Action Zones were established in areas identified as disadvantaged. In 2001 'Excellence in Cities' affected some areas, and the London, Greater Manchester and Black Country Challenges were followed in 2015 by the 'Opportunity Areas' (chosen because they are neglected and disadvantaged smaller areas not in the big cities) launched and extended by Justine Greening when she was Secretary of State.

Whether the interventions have been national or place-based, they haven't shifted what is called the attainment gap between the higher and lower attaining pupils in schools. This is despite the fact that since the turn of the millennium, there has been all-party agreement about the desirability of 'closing the gap' which is the subject of this important

book. Indeed, the pupil premium in particular, has focused schools' attention in a way which hasn't happened before.

In America, Richard Rothstein's research (Rothstein, 2004) has shown that American schools are good at not allowing the gap to widen during the school year – though they don't narrow it – and that it widens further during their long summer holidays. From this we might deduce two things. First that there should be some attention paid to the length of the summer holidays – and prospective changes to the school holiday pattern are mooted from time to time. Secondly that what happens in the home and the community seems to act as a brake on progress made by the school. Like most things educational, however, it's more complex than that. It depends on so many factors.

Some pupils, despite apparently insurmountable barriers, succeed in bucking the trend for a combination of reasons, one of which includes meeting an extraordinary adult – more often than not a teacher. The following moving evidence to an American Commission on Excellence and Equality (NCTAF, 1996) illustrates such an example:

> *I was meant to be a welfare statistic but it's because of a teacher that I stand at this table giving evidence to you. I remember her telling us one miserable November day that she couldn't provide us with food, she couldn't replace our old clothes and she could do absolutely nothing about the terrible segregated conditions in which we lived but what she could do was teach us to read and introduce us to the world of books. And that's what she did.*
>
> *What a world! I visited Asia and Africa. I ran away with escaped slaves and stood beside a teenage martyr. I saw magnificent sunsets and wandered by great lakes. And I composed lines of verse. I knew then I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to weave magic.*

Other vulnerable pupils have the good fortune to attend a school which, because of its approach, transforms the futures of many such pupils who would be lost without trace in another school. This book will help more schools to defy the odds and change vulnerable children's lives for the better.

Nevertheless, that should not allow us to ignore one uncomfortable systemic flaw which makes teachers' and schools' efforts to close the gap a variant on Sisyphus's task of pushing a boulder up the Herculean Hill. The variation on the story – which it will be recalled always caused the boulder to roll back down just as Sisyphus had with enormous effort pushed it to the top – is that one school's success in closing the gap causes another school's attempt to fail. The reason for this lies in the way we assess children and the difference between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests.

Norm-referenced tests are specifically designed to rank test takers on a 'bell curve', or a distribution of scores that resembles, when graphed, the outline of a bell – ie, a small percentage of students performing well, most performing average, and a small percentage performing poorly. To produce a bell curve each time, test questions are carefully designed to accentuate performance differences among test takers, not to determine if students have achieved specified learning standards, learned certain material, or

acquired specific skills and knowledge. Tests that measure performance against a fixed set of standards or criteria are called criterion referenced tests. Norm-referencing is made worse when, irrespective of the standard achieved, it is pre-determined what percentage will pass a high-stakes test. For example, the best 20 per cent going to the grammar school is a norm reference, as is selecting the best 36 regardless of the number of entries. Selecting all those scoring over the pass mark in the test is criterion-referencing since the actual number selected will be governed by the criteria regardless of whether there are 37 or 95 entries and whether 6 or 35 achieve the level required.

Criterion-referencing sets the criteria; the ticks to be achieved on the MOT test or the length to be swum for the beginner's certificate or the standard set for musical instrumental grade exams are all criterion-referenced. Premium Bond winners are norm-referenced as about 1 per cent of entries are drawn each month. Football leagues are norm-referenced. The champion this year may have many more points than last years' champion and relegation is the fate of the last three teams regardless of how many points they secure.

Unfortunately for teachers' and schools' efforts to 'close the gap', SATs and GCSEs are norm-referenced so that it is a pre-determined outcome that a proportion must fail, irrespective of the performance against specific standards.

I have been interviewing Secretaries of State for Education with a colleague for a book we are writing together. We asked each of them if with the benefit of hindsight, they had any regrets. *'Yes,'* David Blunkett replied, *'I wish I had known about the flaws of norm-referencing in exams. It causes such damage.'*

It is ironic to reflect how long this simple fatal flaw in the system has persisted. The phrases 'Closing the Gap' or 'No child left behind' are two familiar examples drawn from the US and the UK which have been coined by politicians desperate to improve standards of pupil outcomes in our schools. Such outcomes have been narrowly measured. They have been dominated by reference to 'attainment' in English (mainly literacy rather than oracy, which as we know is a vital adult skill yet is now not assessed in English schools) and maths as well as a range of academic subjects, epitomised by the EBacc whose ingredient subjects are exactly the same as those which grammar schools were judged by over a hundred years ago. All these test and exam results are norm-referenced.

My plea to those who read this excellent book, which undoubtedly will enable you to rescue the futures of many more children, is ask to you to lobby your MP to campaign for the replacement of norm-referenced by criterion-referenced tests and exams in schools. Only by doing that can we ensure that your success is not at the expense of another less fortunate person's failure. It doesn't have to be like this.

Read on, think, learn and act. Let us win what H G Wells (1920, p 594) called the '*race between education and catastrophe*' – not just for the individual pupils we teach but the society we live in.

1 Introduction

Better is possible. It does not take genius. It takes diligence, it takes moral clarity. It takes ingenuity. And above all, it takes a willingness to try.

(Atul Gawande)

This chapter covers:

- the reasons for writing this book and how it will support staff working in educational settings;
- the case for equity and diversity;
- a brief overview of the diversity of pupils in our classes and educational settings;
- key concepts and terms that are critical to our understanding of addressing equity and diversity in our educational system;
- the pressing issues facing us at the moment which impact particularly on equity matters in society;
- the moral and legal case for why addressing equity and diversity is essential for all staff working in educational settings;
- the format of the chapters and a brief overview of what the book covers.

This book is the culmination of my work in addressing equity and diversity issues over 35 years of working in education in a variety of extremely rewarding roles. For the past 20 years in particular, I have worked closely with hundreds of leadership teams in both primary and secondary schools in England, to successfully close the achievement and attainment gaps for a range of pupils. We all know the transformational role that

education can play, not only in the lives of individual pupils and their families but in whole communities too. For many pupils it is only through education that they will have a chance of having a better life than their parents. However, we also know that too many pupils still fall between the cracks and are denied this opportunity for lots of different reasons, some to do with the variability in the quality of education they receive in their schools and others to do with ingrained structural inequalities perpetuated by society at large. These structural inequalities can manifest themselves in different ways dependent on the characteristics of the pupils in our educational settings.

The aim of this book is to ensure that leaders and staff in schools are better informed about the issues impacting on the achievement and attainment of different groups of pupils. Each chapter begins by bringing together in one place all the relevant research pertaining to particular groups of pupils, highlighting the key issues pertinent to them, as well as proven best practice in addressing their achievement and attainment gaps. Each chapter then provides an overview of current attainment outcomes for that particular group where the data is readily available and accessible. This will enable you to get an in-depth understanding of the issues and reflect on your learning before moving on to supporting you in your quest to better meet the needs of these pupils. You will be supported in this endeavour by being able to access a number of key strategies and resources that will support you to close these particular equity and diversity gaps. The strategies and resources shared in this book will, hopefully, stimulate you to seek out additional strategies and resources as part of your own continuing professional development in these areas that is tailored to the particular needs of pupils. As we know, there are no quick fixes, so embarking on reading this book is the start of your journey in developing a greater understanding of and the requisite knowledge and skills to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse educational settings.

The case for equity and diversity

The vast majority of teachers and leaders I have worked with over the years state that one of the compelling reasons they came into teaching was because they wanted to make a difference to future generations of children and young people. While understanding that schools cannot fully compensate for the inequalities in society at large, they firmly believed that a good education could provide a buffer and enable children and young people to have access to more opportunities than their parents and in doing so, follow a path which would lead them to having a better life than their parents. There was what I call 'pragmatic optimism' for the pupils in their charge, with some exceptional teachers and leaders making sure the education they provided excelled against the odds and that postcode of their pupils and their backgrounds did not determine their future destinies. Overall, most agreed that their 'moral purpose' was to ensure that a pupil's attainment, health and well-being should not be determined by their parents' income. However, at the same time they were fully aware that our current education system '*All too often, instead of equalising life chances… reproduces existing advantages and disadvantages*' (Dyson et al, 2010).

In my numerous conversations with colleagues, they cited many reasons for wanting to make a significant difference to the young people in their charge. These centred around three key aims as defined by Blundell et al (2001):

1. **private returns**, which relate to personal benefits to individuals and are translated in terms of having a good income, respected occupation, and high levels of well-being and health;
2. **social returns**, which relate to improvements in general health, active participation and social cohesion in society;
3. **economic returns**, which relate to increases in employment and labour productivity.

They felt strongly that any education system and ours in particular should contribute significantly towards achieving these three aims. I am sure just by the fact that you are reading this book, you too will have your own personal reasons for wanting to make a significant difference to the next generation of children and young people entrusted to you, regardless of the context, demographics and backgrounds of the pupils you serve.

One of the challenges that is often posited is that you cannot have both equity and excellence, with each being somehow directly opposed to one another. However, these are not binary situations and research has shown that the best education systems in the world have both equity and excellence. Further information on this is provided in Chapter 9.

This takes us to diversity and again similar arguments are put forward to state that diversity and high performance are somewhat incompatible, yet this is simply not true. Research undertaken by McKinsey in a number of reports (Hunt et al, 2015, 2018, 2020) shows that the business case for gender equality, diversity and inclusion is stronger than ever in terms of impacting positively on performance. In their research they found that:

> *companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on their executive teams were 15 per cent more likely to experience above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile. In our expanded 2017 data set this number rose to 21 per cent and continued to be statistically significant. For ethnic and cultural diversity, the 2014 finding was a 35 per cent likelihood of outperformance, comparable to the 2017 finding of a 33 per cent likelihood of outperformance.*
>
> (Hunt et al, 2018, p 1)

Their latest research shows '*not only that the business case remains robust but also that the relationship between diversity on executive teams and the likelihood of financial outperformance has strengthened over time*' (Hunt et al, 2020, p 1). Although education has followed the lead from business in many ways in an attempt to improve educational provision and outcomes, it still lacks the insight provided by business to look at the business case and findings of having a truly inclusive and diverse workforce, especially at leadership level.

In England, as you will see shortly in this chapter, our classes have become increasingly diverse and are likely to continue to grow in diversity, yet our teaching force, especially at leadership level, is quite out of calibration with the changes that are taking place in our society and schools at large. We have a situation where the Department for Education's (2018a) own research shows that leadership of the teaching profession remains stubbornly and primarily white and male, even though women make up most of the teaching

workforce. Without any coherent strategy to address these inequalities it is likely that any changes that do take place are likely to be slow and make minimal progress.

Syed (2019) in *Rebel Ideas* extols the benefits of both demographic diversity (differences in race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, religion and so on) and cognitive diversity (differences in thoughts, insights and perspectives), with frequent overlaps between the two. His book proves plenty of examples of situations when diversity would have led to better decision-making, such as the catastrophic failings of the CIA before 9/11 and the communication breakdown on top of Mount Everest. He also cites the McKinsey research mentioned already, as well as research undertaken by an American professor of economics who found that an increase in racial diversity of one standard deviation increased productivity by more than 25 per cent in legal, health and financial services. Syed states that this is because such teams have a wide range of perspectives and fewer blind spots. He goes on to explain that not only do homogeneous groups underperform, they do so in predictable ways. This is because they are surrounded by people who are similar to them and, as such, not only do they share each other's blind spots but they also reinforce them. He calls this 'mirroring', whereby when surrounded by people who reflect one's picture of reality, you reflect this picture back to them rather than bringing other perspectives to the situation.

The diversity of pupils within our classrooms

In any classroom in England, there are pupils from a range of different backgrounds sitting in front of you waiting to be taught by you. The typical diversity of 100 pupils at schools in England in 2020 is shown in Figure 1.1.

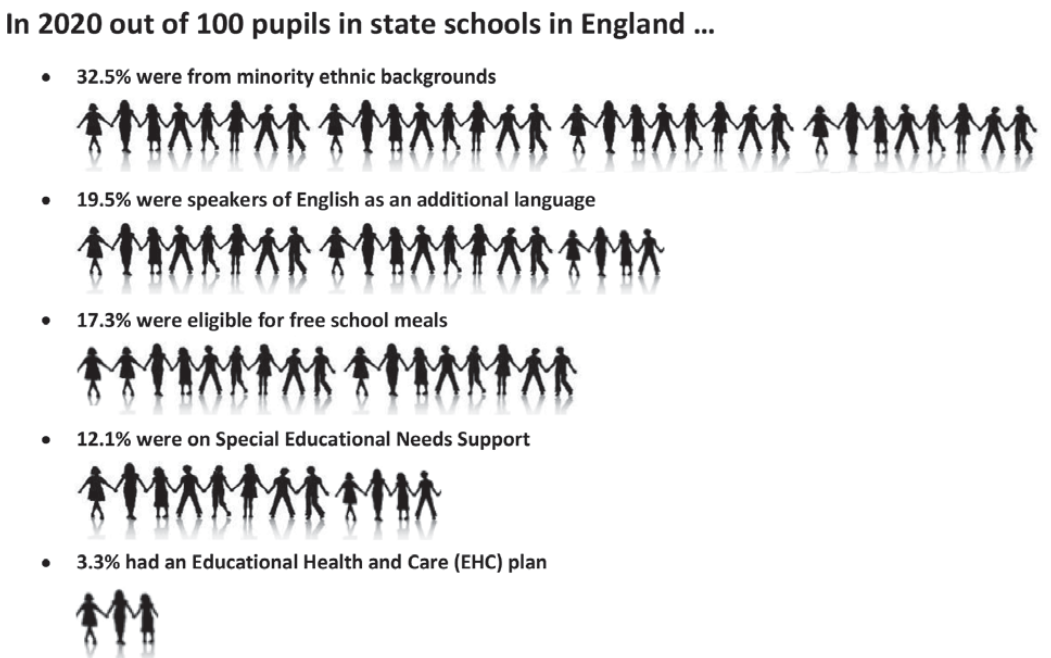

Figure 1.1 *The diversity of pupil population in schools in England out of 100 pupils. Based on 2020 national figures provided by the DfE.*

Of course, these percentages will vary dependent on which school and region you teach in. However, even if you are working in quite a monolithic context now, it is highly likely that over the duration of your career as a teacher you will encounter a wide range of needs and growing diversity in your class and school.

Meeting the needs of a range of pupils and addressing the gaps in professional development of school staff in this area is the genesis of this book. I have used my knowledge, skills and proven track record of working collaboratively with many schools to positively impact on outcomes for pupils, especially the most vulnerable, and attempted to crystallise this into the contents of this book. The intention is that you will be able to readily access the information and the support you need in one place and in doing so this book will assist you in developing the requisite skills, knowledge and understanding to address these needs well in your classroom and school.

Current events and their relevance to this book

During the writing of this book two significant world events occurred that have a direct bearing on the contents, as well as catapulting the necessity to address matters of equity in education as a matter of urgency. The first is coronavirus (Covid-19), the invisible and lethal pandemic that has swept the world, claiming the lives of millions and severely affecting millions more, with the most vulnerable members of society being particularly hard hit. This is still a constantly changing situation, and it remains unclear how long the world will be held hostage to this pandemic. At the current time of writing (end of March 2021) we see that there have been approximately 150,000 deaths with Covid-19 on the death certificate in the UK, with the second surge from the beginning of January 2021 to present claiming more than three times as many lives lost than in the first surge in 2020 (Gov.uk, 2021).

What is clear is that Covid-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities in the UK that have been evident for a long time, particularly as a result of years of successive governments pursuing policies of austerity. A Public Health England report into the risk and outcomes of Covid-19 has shown that it has disproportionally impacted on particular groups as follows.

> *The largest disparity found was by age. Among people already diagnosed with COVID-19, people who were 80 or older were seventy times more likely to die than those under 40. Risk of dying among those diagnosed with COVID-19 was also higher in males than females; higher in those living in the more deprived areas than those living in the least deprived; and higher in those in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups than in White ethnic groups. These inequalities largely replicate existing inequalities in mortality rates in previous years, except for BAME groups, as mortality was previously higher in White ethnic groups.*
>
> (Public Health England, 2020b, p 4)

Public Health England also found that Covid-19 has detrimentally impacted on those working in certain occupations:

> *When compared to previous years, we also found a particularly high increase in all cause deaths among those born outside the UK and Ireland; those in a range of caring occupations including social care and nursing auxiliaries and assistants; those who drive passengers in road vehicles for a living including taxi and minicab drivers and chauffeurs; those working as security guards and related occupations; and those in care homes.*
>
> (Public Health England, 2020b, p 4)

In addition, *Guardian* columnist and author Frances Ryan (2020) provides shocking figures for disabled people affected by Covid-19. Drawing on Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, she states that disabled people make up two-thirds of coronavirus deaths in the UK. Indeed, estimates by the ONS show that disabled people are 11 times more likely to die due to the coronavirus. Figure 1.2 shows who was affected by Covid-19 in the UK during the first wave in 2020 and by how much.

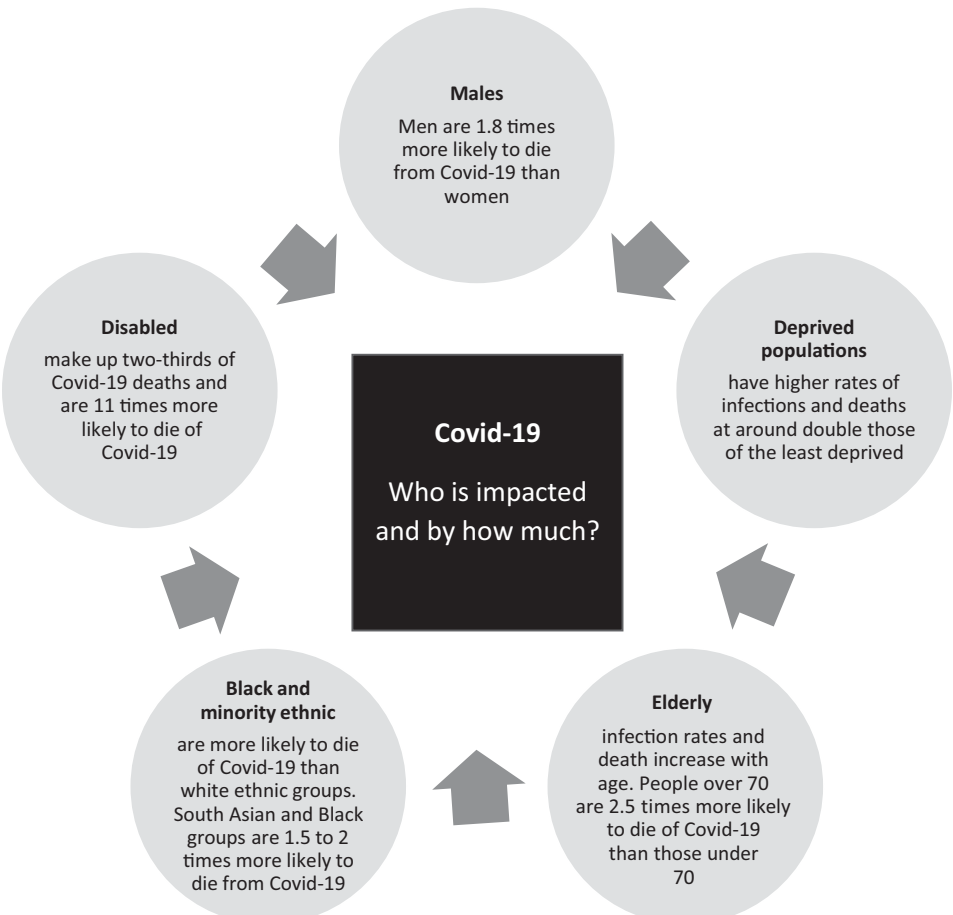

Figure 1.2 *Who is affected by Covid-19 in the UK the most and by how much?*
Adapted from SAGE (2020).

Not only has Covid-19 had devastating consequences for the vulnerable in society, this was also played out in education and the awarding of A levels and GCSE examinations results, in particular with pupils being unable to take their examinations in the summer of 2020. In March 2020, when the pandemic resulted in the government closing schools for the first time, a decision was made by the Secretary of State that there would be no examinations that year. We were assured that no young person would be adversely affected and that the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) would ensure that there would be a fair procedure in place in awarding examination grades. Instead what happened was that an algorithm for awarding grades based on centre-assessed grades to ensure that national results would be 'broadly similar to previous years' was used. This was because concerns were expressed that teacher-assessed grades would not be accurate. As a result, teachers were asked to supply an estimated grade for each pupil for each subject, as well as ranking each pupil so that they could compare this with every other pupil at the school. Critics had already warned of the fact that a high-performing pupil at an underperforming school was likely to have their results downgraded as a result of the algorithm, as was a school which was rapidly improving. However, despite earlier protestations that this would be an unfair system, a debacle ensued on results day when A level grades were announced on 13 August 2020, which resulted in the grades being nearly 40 per cent lower than teachers' assessments in an effort to 'maintain standards' and contain 'grade inflation'. It also soon became apparent that pupils in selective private schools, who in most years perform well due to the characteristics of their pupils, were automatically placed at an advantage by the algorithm compared to those in state schools. Furthermore, in a blog written by FFT Education Datalab (Nye and Thomson, 2020) it soon became obvious that class size had had an impact on the awarding of grades, with those in smaller class sizes being given an unfair advantage. This resulted in private schools, which normally have smaller class sizes, gaining an unfair advantage. Accusations of unfairness ensued, with a detrimental impact on disadvantaged young people being highlighted. This soon led to the government backtracking and abandoning the use of the algorithm and instead deciding to use centre-awarded grades in an attempt to contain the public backlash. In order to avoid the same problem, the same decision was made in awarding the grades for GCSEs a week later. This debacle was a perfect example of how existing inequalities can so easily be perpetuated, with potential winners and losers dependent on the system that is used to award grades.

The second monumental world event in 2020 was the shocking murder of George Floyd in May 2020. His last moments were graphically captured on video, so the whole world could see a white police office kneeling on Floyd's neck for over eight minutes during an arrest, while Floyd cried '*I can't breathe*'. The last three words he uttered are, appallingly, a common refrain uttered by many black people before dying in similar circumstances with little hope of justice or change taking place. This horrendous act rightly caused tumultuous waves first in America and then across the globe. Many other black people in America and also in the UK have suffered extreme injustices, which have led to the highest penalty of all – the loss of life. In the UK, an investigation by the BBC (Reality Check Team, 2020) showed that black people were more than twice as likely than their white

counterparts to die in police custody. The Lammy Review, commissioned by Theresa May in 2017 as part of her work in addressing 'burning injustices' when she became Prime Minister, highlighted the over-representation of black and minority ethnic people in the criminal justice system. Although they only represent 14 per cent of the overall adult population, they made up 25 per cent of adult prisoners and an incredible 41 per cent of the under-18s in youth custody. Furthermore, these shocking figures came at a time when youth offending rates were falling significantly. Despite this, black and minority ethnic young people continue to make up a higher share of those offending for the first time, those reoffending after a conviction and those serving a custodial sentence, highlighting disparities within the criminal justice system.

As a result of this, in the midst of the pandemic there were scenes of the toppling of statues that symbolised race injustices going back many centuries and the ongoing legacy of race inequalities suffered by too many today. In the United States, in Confederate states – a group of southern states that had fought to keep black people as slaves in the American Civil War between 1861 and 1865 – we saw Christopher Columbus statues being torn down, with pressure on the authorities to remove monuments connected to slavery and colonialism. In the UK, similar scenes were seen with the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol. Furthermore, calls were once again made for Cecil Rhodes' prominent statue, proudly displayed on the facade of Oriel College, Oxford University, to be removed due to its imperial and colonial legacy.

This has led to campaigners wanting the curriculum to be diversified so that young people are not only taught about slavery but given a well-rounded education as to the contributions that civilisations from across the world have made to human knowledge. There are also demands that there should be an opportunity within the curriculum to learn about Britain's colonial and imperial history, warts and all, rather than the sanitised version that is often promulgated. Current narratives mainly promote an understanding that colonialism was a benevolent exercise, rather than it having severe and direct consequences for many minority ethnic communities now settled and living in the UK. For many these dishonest narratives provide a disservice to all and distort facts and history, which is untenable in modern day society.

These two current world events are examples of burning injustices that impact on the vulnerable and marginalised in society. They shine a light on existing inequity and diversity issues that have been ignored and buried in society. During this time, I have been amazed at the work staff in educational settings have undertaken to support families, from checking up on the welfare of pupils and extending this to their families, even to the extent of providing essential food and groceries when this was not forthcoming nationally. Staff have been personally delivering food parcels to ensure that their most vulnerable pupils are getting fed, which is a remarkable situation to see in a country that is one of the richest in the world. Covid-19 has accelerated the underlying inequity gaps in our society at a time when the use of food banks has increased remarkably. Figures by the Trussell Trust (2020), a nationwide network of food banks which provides emergency food and support for people locked in poverty, show that in April–September 2015 they delivered 506,369 food parcels. In the intervening years this has grown exponentially to

1,239,399 for the same period in 2020. They state that in the UK, more than 14 million people are living in poverty, of which 4.5 million are children. Between April 2019 and March 2020, Trussell Trust food banks in their network provided a record 1.9 million food supplies to people in crisis, which was an 18 per cent increase on the previous year. Schools have played a pivotal role in this area and have acted as an emergency service to many desperate pupils and their families.

Educational settings have also once again been reminded of the stark and appalling racial injustices that continue to be faced by black people across the globe. Their pupils have been asking them pertinent questions about the Black Lives Matter movement (#BLM), and many colleagues in educational settings have felt that their curriculum is woefully lacking in better educating their pupils about such important matters if we are to achieve a more cohesive and just society in the future. This has led to many critically looking at their curriculum and revisiting the content of what they teach. However, many feel that they need support in this area to do this well as there are gaps in their own knowledge, understanding and skills because the subject has never been a national priority area, despite the significant changes that have taken place in the curriculum over the past ten years or so.

Without doubt, staff in educational settings morally want to do the right thing and be responsive to such significant and far-reaching events, which change society forever. They find that competing demands on their time and the challenges they themselves face make it difficult to make real positive change. Often such important matters are seen as being on the periphery, with a push nationally by the Department for Education and Ofsted, the school inspections regulator, for a return to the status quo, for getting back to 'normal' as soon as possible. It is at this point worth mentioning that staff in educational settings are bound by legal frameworks, which clearly set out their responsibilities and duties towards their pupils affected by the issues mentioned above, as well as meeting the needs of pupils covered in this book. These are outlined in the following section.

Legal context: educational settings and teachers' duties

Educational settings, including teachers and all staff who work in them, have legal duties towards many of the pupils that we will be discussing in this book so it is worth you knowing what your statutory responsibilities are as well as the rights of your pupils. The following are key legal requirements that you need to be up to date with to ensure you are not in breach of your legal obligations.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights. The UK signed the convention

on 19 April 1990. It was ratified on 16 December 1991 and came into force on 15 January 1992.

Altogether, the Convention has 54 articles. They cover all aspects of a child's life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights. It clearly stipulates that every child has rights, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status.

The following articles are particularly pertinent to the groups of pupils covered in this book.

- Article 2 (non-discrimination): The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.
- Article 13 (freedom of expression): Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.
- Article 14 (freedom of thought, belief and religion): Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up.
- Article 15 (freedom of association): Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.
- Article 28 (right to education): Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.
- Article 29 (goals of education): Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.
- Article 30 (children from minority or indigenous groups): Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.
- Article 39 (recovery from trauma and reintegration): Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.