

Strictly Embargoed until 10am, Thursday 19th September 2019

CLPE release second Reflecting Realities report which shows “small yet positive shifts” in representation

- Overall increase in books featuring a BAME character – from 4% in 2017 to 7% in 2018.
- Also increase in the number of BAME main protagonists – from 1% in 2017 to 4% in 2018.
- Report shows there is still a long way to go to achieve representation that reflects the UK population.
- Report offers analysis and advice to ensure representation of BAME people is positive and authentic in children’s books, and highlights good practice.

The *Reflecting Realities: Survey of Ethnic Representation within UK Children’s Literature 2018* report was released today, with the key finding that there has been an increased presence of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) characters in children’s books published in 2018, compared to the previous year. This is the second year the survey has been conducted in the UK, with the aim of identifying and highlighting representation within picture books, fiction and non-fiction for ages 3 – 11.

The *Reflecting Realities: Survey of Ethnic Representation within UK Children’s Literature 2018* report was launched at an event attended by publishers, influencers and media at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education Waterloo, London.

The report found that the number of BAME protagonists has increased from 1% to 4%, and the number of books featuring a BAME character has increased from 4% to 7% compared to 2017. 11,011 books were published for children in 2018, of which 743 books were found to have a BAME presence. BAME pupils make up 33.1% of the school population in England.

The report also cautions that publishers must not compromise on quality in order to prioritise quantity of representative characters. As well as highlighting good practice examples, the report outlines areas that still need to be addressed to accurately and positively portray people from a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Louise Johns-Shepherd, Chief Executive of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education said “CLPE works to ensure all children can become literate and so we are heartened that more children will be able to see themselves reflected in their reading material but we are also aware that this is just the beginning of a journey. The call for more inclusive books is as much about quality as it is about volume. Better representation means just that, better in all regards, because all young readers deserve the best that the literary world has to offer.”

The genre of books submitted for the 2018 cycle reflected publishing market trends, including an increase in fantasy and social justice titles. The results of the report also demonstrate an increase in action within the industry, not only via new initiatives such as the establishment of the Round Table Books bookshop in Brixton and the BookTrust Represents campaign, but also with publishers becoming more vocal about their inhouse initiatives and strategies which tackle representation within the industry.

PRESS RELEASE

Stephen Lotinga, Chief Executive of the Publishers Association said: “While it is positive to see incremental progress in these new figures, publishers know that there is much more to do and that the rate of change must accelerate further. The emphasis on quality as well as volume recognised here is also important. As well as building on established initiatives, publishers are making changes to areas such as their commissioning and submissions processes. We recognise the vital nature of CLPE’s work in this area and welcome continued research, discussion and action.”

Arts Council England (ACE) have funded this survey for three years to ensure there are benchmark figures for the industry and a clear picture of the improvements taking place.

“CLPE’s work in investigating the diversity of characters in children’s books, and highlighting the importance of the quality of that representation, continues to be critical as we consider how to support the sector in ensuring that all children are able to see themselves in the books that they read. While it’s very encouraging to see an improvement in rates of representation in this year’s survey, it’s also important to note that at this stage, the improvement is incremental. We will continue to work with CLPE to identify what actions may be needed to increase the rate of change.” Sarah Crown, Director of Literature, Arts Council England

For more information about the Reflecting Realities report or to speak to a member of the CLPE team, please contact Catherine Alport (hello@catherinealportpr.co.uk/ 07843804083)

Notes for Editors:

About Reflecting Realities:

Reflecting Realities is a pioneering programme to establish a regular study into ethnic representation in UK children’s literature. Produced annually, the survey will assess the representation of BAME characters in children’s books published in the UK, with the aim to alter attitudes within publishing and cultural education. The survey is inspired by the model from the Co-operative Children’s Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA, which has published data on US children’s books since 1985, and is led by a steering committee of leading experts in publishing and education.

Analysis:

Ethnic categories were drawn from the UK Census categories with appropriate extensions to these definitions to accommodate broader representations of ethnicity in literature. The analysis framework was structured to consider how many BAME characters featured in each book, their position in the narrative, their degree of agency and the quality of the representation both in the text and in illustrations.

The Steering Group:

The CLPE survey was led by Farrah Serroukh, Programme Leader at CLPE with a steering committee of leading experts in publishing and education including:

- Darren Chetty - Teaching Fellow, UCL Institute of Education
- Dr Fen Coles - Co-director, Letterbox Library
- Louise Johns-Shepherd - Chief Executive, CLPE
- Professor Vini Lander - Professor of Race and Teacher Education, School of Education, University of Roehampton
- Nicky Parker - Publisher, Amnesty UK Publishing
- Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold - Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor, Department of Information Studies at University College London
- Professor Karen Sands O’Connor - British Academy Global Professor for Children’s Literature, SUNY Buffalo State and Newcastle University

PRESS RELEASE

About The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education:

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) is an independent UK charity dedicated to raising the literacy achievement of children by putting quality children's literature at the heart of all learning. It is a charity with a national and international reputation for excellent literacy training and resources. Visit www.clpe.org.uk for further information.

About Arts Council England (ACE):

Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk