


## What do we know about our pupils' backgrounds and how can we use it?

### Research taster

Increasingly schools are becoming more diverse in terms of the ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their pupils. In some cases pupils come to school scarred by experiences of war, ill-treatment, exile, illness or bereavement. Learning about these experiences can help you make the pupils feel their culture is important and so enhance their sense of identity. It may also help you adopt appropriate strategies for responding to emotional or behavioural needs the pupils may have either in-class or through additional support such as counselling. 

### Your evidence


How might you think about how to collect information about your pupils' backgrounds and how to harness this knowledge in school? You could be on the look out for, and make full use of, those occasions when you meet your pupils out of school, for example in local supermarkets, cinema, church, parks, swimming pool and in informal school settings. On such occasions, you could make time to observe your pupils interacting with their families and friends. Strike up conversations with their parents, carers and friends and use these to get to learn more about the child and their family, for example recent and forthcoming family events. You could make this an exchange - not just an exercise in getting to know about them. These are especially valuable opportunities as the territory is neutral so parents who feel some what intimidated by speaking to teachers at school often feel more comfortable within this more mutual kind of conversational exchange.

(Adapted from Reflective Activity 4-2b)

### Moving forward

Are there ways in which you could encourage pupils to bring in elements of home and street culture into school in citizenship or PSHE lessons? Can you find ways of bringing their culture into the curriculum in literacy, technology (food), music or geography (photographs of parent country/family)?

### Find out more

 Hallam, S., Castle, F., Rogers, L., et al (2005) Research and Evaluation of the Behaviour Improvement Programme Research Report RR 702, London: DfES

You may also find these digests from the Research Informed Practice Site helpful:

'Beyond the Frame': exploring children's literacy practices

Sending Minnie the Minx Home: comics and reading choices