Accountability Who is looking out for EAL learners

At a time when calls for equity within education are more needed than ever, it is essential to recognise the significance of accountability in the education of minoritised and marginalised groups and to acknowledge that accountability for these groups can, and should, take on different dimensions than for other groups. True accountability ensures that these communities receive the support, resources and opportunities necessary to not only promote better outcomes but also to foster a more inclusive, open-minded and equitable society. This introduction will explore the crucial role of accountability in the education of three distinct groups, highlighting the need for continued

commitment and action. Although the words 'international school' are often understandably correlated with the notion of privilege, representation are just a few of the factors that can create environments that are not truly responsive to the needs of minoritised students. In our first article, Nunana Nyomi discusses the need for accountability for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice within international schools and explains the work of the International Anti Discrimination Task Force.

As millions of people are forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution, providing access to quality education for children and young adults continues to be a pressing global priority. Much literature focuses on fostering accountability for refugees by ensuring that educational initiatives are culturally responsive and embrace trauma informed practice, however Kathryn Kashyap's article 'Should teachers know about "refugee"



Interview

Accountability for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ)

In conversation with Nunana Nyomi



In 2021, the Council of International Schools published 'Determining the Diversity Baseline', a report based on a survey designed in collaboration with Diversity Collaborative, International School Services, and George Mason University. The survey was designed to investigate cultural diversity, gender balances and the over and under representation of groups within international schools. This report, already arguably skewed by the demographic make-up of the populations surveyed, served to emphatically underline the urgent need to accelerate, expand and consolidate accountability work to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ) in international schools worldwide.

Nunana Nyomi, DEIJ Coordinator at Leysin American School, Switzerland and member of the International School Anti Discrimination Taskforce (ISADTF), discusses accountability for DEIJ and the work of the ISADTF with Deputy Editor Rachel Knowles. At a time where greater awareness of and vocalisation of the post-colonial structures and the systemic racism in international schools is evident, we are seeing growing voices calling for accountability for DEIJ within schools. Considering these increasingly focused and purposive calls to address racism in schools and decolonisation of the curriculum, where do you feel the roots of accountability for DEIJ are perceived to lie in international school education?

Well, I think international schools are really interesting, complex structures to view, particularly when you're doing so through the lens of accountability, because there are so many parties that play a role in establishing accountability, and the extent of that influence clearly varies from school to school. But this said, there are some general groups we can consider from the outset: school's governance structures, wider school communities, accreditation bodies, curriculum providers and local regulatory bodies (such as Ofsted in the UK).

The most obvious one of these to consider would be the school's governance structure: the board of a school; the leadership or leadership structures, heads of school and other administrators. Their accountability should take the form of facilitation of DEIJ policy and following through on their diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice plans and policies ensuring they are implemented with fidelity throughout a school. Teachers, students and parents are also key parts of the accountability structures within schools. Teachers can effect change in the way that they educate, and the vocal influence of staff, students and parents can have a considerable bearing on change within a school.

Then you have school accreditation agencies who serve as external quality assurance bodies and have the task of evaluating schools to see if they meet a certain set of criteria and standards. Some of the most well-known ones are organisations such as CIS (Council of International Schools), Cognia, WASC, NEASC and the British Schools have COBIS (The Council of British International Schools). These types of bodies accredit international schools, evaluating them against internationally benchmarked standards. National laws and national overseeing bodies can also provide forms of accountability. For example, the national regulatory body of Ofsted performs inspections of some British international schools.

Beyond these, you also have other key actors, such as curriculum providers such as the IB (International Baccalaureate), Cambridge, Pearson etc, who in addition to formulating curricula that sustain and elevates students' cultural and linguistic identities, also have a role in providing professional development opportunities concerning DEIJ.

The importance of accountability is also continually present in hiring practices. With this in mind, another group of key actors are recruitment agencies, such as Search Associates, ISS, and TES to name but a few, with whom international schools work to source the teachers who they employ.

Both national and international laws also factor in to varying degrees depending on where the school is based. International schools have to carefully consider those local laws in their host country and work within the bounds of what they might allow or prohibit.

So with such a broad-reaching set of stakeholders where does the responsibility lie?

In regards to DEIJ, what I have frequently observed is that each of these actors keeps shifting the responsibility of accountability onto the others because it's such a complex web. So, it becomes a circular problem. I'll give you some examples of thisconversations that will be very familiar

to people working within international schools.

A leader might say, "Well, I'm powerless to hold my community accountable to DEIJ because I need accreditation agencies to step in." But then the accreditation agency will say, "Well, we're powerless in enforcing a stronger commitment to DEIJ because we're peer-led, and ultimately it's up to the school that needs to take this on." So then, who's responsible?

Within schools we're spending a lot of time pushing the blame. Students might ask their leaders and governors to emphasise greater DEIJ acceptance within the school. But then the leaders may shift the responsibility saying, "Well, we're waiting for the parents to say that this matters because some parents are not on board." So then, who's really responsible?

Some teachers might say they would like more flexibility in the curriculum to address issues with a DEIJ lens and ask for curriculum providers to do something about it. But then the curriculum providers might say they can't be so prescriptive in the curriculum because they want to open it to broad interpretation and ownership by the teachers and open to student agency. So then, again, who's responsible?

Some say the problem is with the demographic makeup of teachers and will lay the blame at the leaders for recruiting poorly. And they will, in turn, blame recruitment agencies for providing pools of candidates from dominant white Western groups. And then the agencies will, in turn, lay blame on the national laws in some countries, which are more prohibitive to certain passport holders. And then we just go round and round and round in this cyclical fashion, while real people are suffering everyday injustices in our schools.

What all key actors need to realise is that for true accountability to further diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in schools, every one of them has to take on this responsibility of accountability to the highest degree possible. The more key actors who accept the importance of DEIJ, the more key actors that accept that this is their responsibility, the more likely we'll see DEIJ gains. It truly has to be

a collective effort. One key actor or accountability group coming on board will not suddenly enact considerable change. It has to be a whole, allencompassing approach.

The killing of George Floyd in the US on May 25th 2020, and the subsequent highlighting of the Black Lives Matter movement, sparked a renewed focus on racial injustice in the field of international education. What changes have you seen since 2020 regarding the commitment to addressing anti-racism in international schools?

Long before 2020, almost as long as international schools have existed, there have been voices calling for international schools to truly live up to the words that they enshrine in their mission statements, which talk about valuing diversity or global citizenship, international-mindedness, intercultural understandings, the valuing of cultures and languages. And so I want to acknowledge those people, and recognise that this is not a new battle being fought. However, what George Floyd's death did was to finally create the conditions for ears to truly hear, for school leaders to sit up and listen to the voices who explain that identity-based injustice also exists within the international school sphere.

And although this was not unique to international schools, we've seen it as a global movement, everyone started questioning their relationship with racial justice in particular. But what did change was that it created the climate for that listening to take place, where those in positions of authority were more ready to receive what was being said.

What has changed is that many of the accountability groups that I mentioned before have now made explicit commitments to eliminating discrimination or promoting DEIJ. And we owe a huge debt of thanks to student groups, alumni groups, parent groups, and teacher groups who enacted a huge amount of grassroots pressure, demanding that schools take action.

Certain accreditation agencies, such as CIS or NEASC, have been more explicit in including anti-racism or DEIJ within their standards. Certain curriculum providers like the IB have for example, hired DEIJ directors and are giving schools the opportunity to explicitly focus on DEIJ as part of program development plans. My school, for example, is doing exactly this.

Some recruitment agencies have initiated practices that highlight schools who state their commitment to DEIJ, indicate whether a school has a DEIJ strategy in place or provide the demographics of staff, so that candidates applying for jobs can theoretically see where the schools are working proactively in this area.

And a select number of schools are fortunate to have courageous leaders and boards who have supported the acceleration of inclusivity practices. So this is all positive.

However, this all comes with a considerable caveat because despite these positive steps, I believe for many institutions this work is still largely performative at best, or there is active resistance at worst. We have reached a point where it is easy to create a committee or plaster the words DEIJ or raise a rainbow flag or Black Lives Matter flag without doing the deep personal, communal, and structural work that is needed to embed DEIJ throughout the entire school. Without this, we have yet to truly safeguard the lives of our students and staff who suffer because of their identity.

As an international educator who works as a DEIJ Coordinator, a chair for the accreditation committee group within the International Schools Anti-Discrimination Taskforce, what motivated you to take such an active role in the field?

I don't know if it's been about motivation as much as it's been part of my destiny to engage in this work. In a way, I simply want to be the educator I wish I had growing up. I grew up as a third culture kid, experiencing several different cultures, having to navigate what it felt like to be different, to be the other in so many instances of my life. So since then, I've always felt a level of empathy for people who find themselves on the margins of society.

And my own experiences growing up have coloured my experiences as an educator. In university, I started to engage more with DEIJ more formally, and I lived in a community dedicated

"In a way, I simply want to be the educator I wish I had growing up."

to anti-racism and intercultural understanding. So this was a time of intense focus on these areas. And then because of those awakenings in my life experience and my deeper work in university, it was a very natural progression that my professional life was then dominated by commitments to access, equity, anti-racism and inclusion.

When I worked in university admissions, it involved advocating for the needs of international students and greater access to education. When I worked at CIS, it involved highlighting the responsibility that that organisation had to provide accountability and promote ideals of equity and inclusion throughout international education. And though I loved my time at CIS, I realised that I would like to play a more active role within a school rather than just preaching at schools. I wanted to lead by doing, and my current role attracted me because I can now come alongside students to guide them in their development toward career fulfilment, but at the same time I can also nurture an inclusive and equitable community. Doing both those things is very fulfilling, I hugely enjoy the challenge and the opportunity to serve in this way.

I am grateful for the opportunities to connect with other like-minded individuals across international education, such as through the Anti-Discrimination Task Force where I was approached to chair the accreditation committee. So for me I would say, it feels more like destiny than necessarily being a motivation, but it is certainly incredibly fulfilling to be a part of this work every day.

Can you explain what the
International Schools AntiDiscrimination Task Force is
and what its vision and purpose is?
The International Schools AntiDiscrimination Taskforce (ISADTF)

group was born of a collaboration between AIELOC, which is the Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color, the International Baccalaureate, ECIS, and the International School of Geneva. They held an inaugural meeting with international school educators, administrators, and international education organisation representatives, such as accrediting agencies and other organisations. The expressed vision was to eliminate discrimination within the international school ecosystem and that, simply stated, is the purpose of ISADTF.

Their vision is for international schools to be truly diverse, inclusive, safe, equitable, and welcoming for all - students, staff, and families by promoting practices that eliminate racism, implicit bias, and discrimination of all kinds. Committee groups are formed around key areas of accountability, such as governance, leadership, pedagogy, educator recruitment, student agency, and accreditation. Since the first meeting, these groups have been meeting virtually and bringing in new voices who were not present in Geneva, thus providing an opportunity for others to speak into it, and so that they can contribute further to the actions within those spheres of accountability in order to influence international schools.

I chair the Accreditation Committee, and as a committee we have a statement listed on the website where we explain that we are committed to an accreditation process that is transparent and free from fear, where individuals will participate authentically, and schools will grow in their ability to identify opportunities to be inclusive and equitable. The goal is to make recommendations to all accrediting agencies in order to use their legitimising influence to help make and sustain necessary strategies for inclusive international schools, thus envisaging a future where accreditation is an integral part of eliminating discrimination in the international school ecosystem. And we are working on recommendations (alongside representatives from these organisations) for the accrediting bodies to take and use to actually further this more inclusive goal of

having DEIJ included in accreditation frameworks.

In an ideal state, how do you feel accreditation can increase accountability and drive the strategic priorities in order to reduce obstacles to racial injustice and inequity faced by staff in international schools?

As one of the key areas of accountability, accreditation has an important role to play when it comes to influencing schools to address racism and other forms of inequity. As a whole school improvement mechanism that is subscribed to by a significant number of international schools, accreditation can be really a major driver for change.

And this can be exemplified through changes that occurred with regards to child protection. Nearly 10 years ago, the International Task Force on Child Protection was created, and it includes representatives from some accrediting agencies, and they all agreed to be more explicit in their standards around child protection. And the effect is so visible in international schools around the world, as standards have dramatically improved and has had broad reaching positive impacts on the students and staff in schools. We are positive that we can affect similar levels of change in DEIJ.

Our accreditation committee is still finalising recommendations at the time of this interview. However, I can highlight a few themes that are arising where we feel accreditation agencies can take action. One of them is ensuring that accreditation processes are more representative of the diversity of voices within a school. For example, amplifying marginalised voices, such as focusing on the voices of local instead of expat staff and ensuring there is a strong student voice, and actively including the more marginalised groups in schools. Secondly, building the diversity and capacity of accreditation staff and volunteers. Accreditation agencies should be actively recruiting for diversity on visiting teams, and ensuring that all teams receive training to view institutions with a DEIJ lens. As it's not enough just to have people of colour or other forms of diversity, it's also important that we make sure that individuals are truly trained to see things through a DEIJ lens. Thirdly, accreditation agencies should strengthen their standards when it comes to DEIJ expectations for schools with clearly and well-defined anti-discrimination standards which all schools can aspire to.

I believe that by adopting these actions, accreditation will become a significant weapon to address racism and all forms of discrimination within schools.

How do you envisage the conscious work, connected to the accreditation process that you have described, serving to reduce cultural and linguistic hierarchies (Western/Eurocentric norms) within international schools? And what would be the potential impact on students?

I am very passionate about the potential it has to reduce cultural and linguistic hierarchies, particularly hierarchies which have white, Western, and Eurocentric norms at the centre. My own cultural and linguistic heritage is from Ghana in West Africa. However, my whole life has been spent in schools with a Western-dominant outlook. And personally, I rejected my own mother tongue language in favour of Western languages. In those days, there was no talk of trans-languaging. There was no understanding that fostering a love of one's home language can be used as a scaffold to learn other languages. So I missed out.

And sadly, these hierarchies still exist. Even with the advances which have been made when it comes to how language acquisition is taught in many places, you still see it. Dr. Danau Tanu in her book, Growing Up in Transit, talks about the hidden curriculum which students are exposed to in schools where they see certain cultures or identities being rewarded, and then they internalise this. Students see

how we treat local versus expat staff. Students see the white and mostly male faces in leadership positions. Students see which language speakers get rewarded over other language speakers in a social setting.

And so my question is, what harm are we doing to students who come from non-dominant perspectives when they're exposed to this environment? Are we helping them thrive as their full selves? Or are we simply encouraging them to jettison their identities and take on a new dominant Western culture? You know, we say in our statements that we want a world of true intercultural understanding. But if that's true, then we must strengthen our accountability structures relative to DEIJ. If not, the risk is that we're risking creating a world where our students will lose their rich cultural and linguistic heritage. And such a world would lack the creativity and diverse perspectives we so desperately need to tackle the world's greatest challenges. So for me, this is truly a fundamental thing, fundamental in the sense of it being missing piece in the way in which international education has been carrying itself for so long, that is to take a truly global perspective that centres around the rich cultural and linguistic heritage that is already represented within these diverse student bodies.

Nunana currently serves as University Advisor and DEIJ Coordinator at Leysin American School (LAS) in Switzerland. Prior to LAS, he held roles at CIS and in US higher education

Information on the International Schools Anti-Discrimination Task Force can be found https://www.ecis.org/taskforce/



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Should teachers know about "refugee" as a learner identity?

Kathryn Kashyap focuses on refugee awareness

Illustrations ©Cincinart

"I'm not a refugee because I am going home!" Thus retorted a pupil recently to a teacher when hearing the refugee label assigned to him. The trauma of forced migration, its impact on hopes and aspirations, the need to hold on to "home" resonated through his statement. It also made me think again about when, how and why we might or might not use this term as educators.

We know that children and young people resist identifications as "refugees" or "new arrivals" with their peers very early on, to negotiate a sense of belonging within the hierarchies and systemic inequalities in a school (Phoenix 2011). Also, families may not identify with this term to try to avoid the institutional racism and discrimination they fear they will face should their status be known (see for example Maya Ghazal's story¹). Furthermore, those who have sought sanctuary may not want to have a refugee or asylum seeker label continually assigned to them - it attracts negative responses, victimisation, "misery porn" or "sympathy" that is unhelpful2 (Le Franc et al 2019; Massari 2021).

So, considering our theme of accountability in this issue, is it important for teachers to know whether families are, or have been, refugees or asylum seekers? How should we deploy this label in our practice, if at all? Often schools are rightly concerned about asking

sensitive, confidential questions and potentially alienating those who are vulnerable. Historically there was significant anxiety about putting families in danger of deportation through the DfE requirement to collect nationality and place of birth. (This obligation was removed in 2018 at the same time as stopping the submission of codes of fluency). On the other hand, if teachers do not know and understand the backgrounds of pupils and their families, are we in danger of not meeting individual needs appropriately, including safeguarding, health, and wellbeing concerns? It was safeguarding that recently inspired Achieving for Children's rewrite of Wokingham's initial question³ to use with new arrivals.

Firstly, we need to problematise the label refugee as a colonial construct. In her article on refugee lifelong education, Morrice (2021) explores how "refugee" was initially produced as a Eurocentric mechanism to cater for White Europeans displaced after the end of the Second World War. A change to include all people groups in the UN declaration was not made till much later. However, racialised views of who is acceptable as a refugee or even an asylum seeker persists, shown clearly in recent UK government decisions about who is seen as needing safety versus those constructed as "illegal". Even those considered "worthy" of this support such as Afghans who worked

with the British forces, are being denied access.⁴

Furthermore, Morrice delineates the complexities around forced migration in the 21st Century which are far wider than the threat of war and persecution, arguing that the UN's construct of refugee is outdated. Although "refugee" is used to denote a legal status for certain people who are given leave to remain in a country, Morrice suggests that continuing to use the term more widely with a critical, decolonising lens can help to ensure we focus on the specific needs of learners, particularly those who have had disrupted formal education. Thus being "refugee aware" in considering the experiences that pupils and families may have had, including if they are not from wellknown refugee producing countries, can help inform our practice. The guidance for refugee week⁵ this year clearly states that the term refugee needs to be "reclaimed" and should be self-identified.

Illegal Migration Bill

We also need to recognise the fragile state of refugee status in this country. At the time of writing, the Illegal Migration Bill is in the committee stage. Strong challenges from the Joint Committee on Human Rights⁶, the Local Government Association7 and refugee NGOs demonstrate how far the bill in its present form denies the rights of both adults and children enshrined in both UK and international law. Massari's (2021) exploration of NGO portrayals of Syrian refugees discusses how after genocides in the 1990s the focus of aid shifted from a needs-based to a rights-based approach.

This required protection of people's safety, dignity and integrity, not just physical assistance. She argues that this protection is a deeply political process, entwined with securitization. It leads to fundamental questions about what we are protecting, who is doing the protecting and what the "emergency" is. Ironically, we are seeing now how the entitlement to "rights" can be manipulated by those seeking to deny sanctuary, as well as being used to challenge these views by those striving to ensure equity and justice.

The system for new arrivals to the UK is becoming more and



more splintered as communities are allocated different "routes" and different funding, or none. For example, Hong Kongers are arriving under a route related to colonial rule rather than applying for political asylum. Asylum seekers under section 95 or 98 are allocated different, minimal, resources and rights. The disparate nature of these systems can make it very difficult for schools to ensure they have accessed the support, financial and otherwise, that is in place. Furthermore, integration is hampered as funding streams for specific groups have accountability measures that demand that provision is discrete.

For example, having to run parent meetings just for Hong Kongers rather than for all; no extra educational financial support for Ukrainians who arrived under the family visa system. If refugee and asylum seeker status is to be denied to most, as the Bill seeks to do, then there is an even further splintering of the process, and meeting needs becomes even more pressing as well as challenging. Children in detention centres are provided with an education – how appropriate and

purposeful is another question I would add to the Joint Committee's list.

This disparate system means we need to contest racialised, gendered and classed views of what those who seek sanctuary are entitled to. Here, Maslow's work on a hierarchy of needs can be unhelpful as it can suggest that providing for basic physical needs will enable people to move on to meet "higher" needs and therefore adjust well to a new environment. Instead Desmet and Fokkinga (2020) suggest a typology of thirteen psychological needs that they argue are fundamental for wellbeing and crucially reject notions of hierarchy.

Dr Tina Rae's (2023) new book provides guidance on how schools can meet the needs of pupils and families seeking sanctuary. She is clear that creating school as a safe space is not just about having a building to learn in or food to eat. Furthermore, the flexibility provided at present for the Pupil Premium Grant to be used for "vulnerable" pupils is a useful tool for schools to help meet a range of needs. In published statements we need to see more specific reference

to the heterogeneity of pupils who are experiencing disadvantage, including details of how schools are meeting the needs of refugee pupils, rather than the "one size fits all approach" which is reflected in the DfE exemplars.

The danger of deficit views

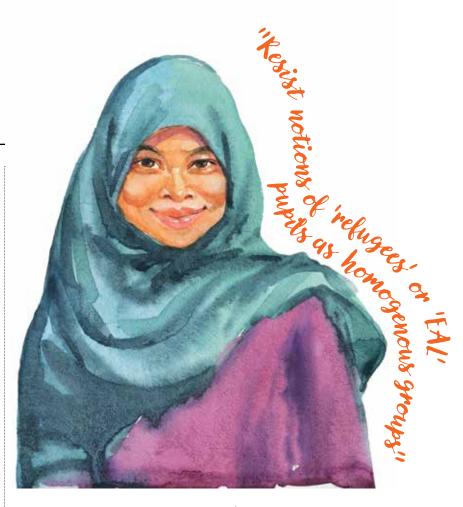
In my research looking at the intersection of "race", migration and SEND, I found that we must engage with the complexities of refugee and migrant backgrounds over time, not just at the point of arrival. Otherwise, the needs of pupils and families can be obscured. Not recognising these backgrounds can increase the danger of deficit views, positioning pupils as unable, disruptive, or unmotivated and families as disinterested or unsupportive. Instead, considering "refugee" as a learner identity can raise our awareness of specific issues that may require personalised approaches. We also need to remember that refugees do not all have the same needs, and that inequalities connected to forced migration can be experienced by others, even if they do not face the extent of multiple and intersectional challenges that those seeking sanctuary do. For example, the impact of covid means that at present any newly arrived pupil may have had disruption to their education; pupils whose families have chosen to migrate can still have significant emotional health needs because of their move.

The need to understand backgrounds does not mean we need to ask lots of personal questions, particularly when families are new, and we do not need to overtly use the label "refugee". An anti-racist, critical lens can raise our awareness of the potential needs of pupils and families and the support we may need to provide, whilst building up trusting relationships. For example, in my recent work on intersectionalities of SEND, PPG and EAL with a school it was useful to consider what the impact of migration was on families from countries experiencing difficulties with terrorism, climate change and religious persecution, and not assume that these families had arrived unproblematically. This opened up questions about school approaches, without having to ask immediately for private information.

Cover feature

Here are some suggestions of what we can do to create refugee awareness in our work:

- Engage with the complexity of migrant experiences resisting coloniality around which countries are considered "safe".
- Resist notions of "refugees" or "EAL" pupils as homogenous groups.
- Resist hierarchisation, notions of "deserving" support and assumptions that certain individuals or groups are "ok".
- Challenge our assumptions about who may have/ may be experiencing difficult situations, trauma or stress including caring roles, being looked after (including in private fostering arrangements), the risk of trafficking.
- Recognise generational migration stressors, not rejecting the need for awareness about family background and present circumstances simply because a pupil was born in the UK.
- Remember that we use whole school, whole class strategies for all pupils and families who use EAL and do so with extra care and precision where we are concerned about vulnerability.
- Do our best to ensure provision for



all through the way that finances are used and do not assume that families can afford educational resources even if they are not on FSM.

Morrice concludes her article on lifelong education with the call to start with a person's aspirations and work backwards to develop a plan for them to achieve, however complicated that may be within a national system that is inflexible. There are good reasons for educators to need to know families' refugee status to ensure they access the right support, but the wider awareness

of forced migration experiences is also vital to inform our work and help us to guide our pupils and their families towards success. Upholding and persevering with children and young people's right to a purposeful education can be a challenge in the present environment, but it is one with which we must all continue to engage and not give up.

Kathryn Kashyap is a school improvement adviser for multilingualism and racial iustice

Footnotes

 ${}^{1}https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/refugee-week-discrimination_uk_5d075befe4b0985c41a0602a$

²https://thepienews.com/news/dont-like-label-refugee-heis-told/

 3 https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/community-information/information-and-advice/education-and-education-services/welcoming-new-arrivals-to-the-uk-into-schools

https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/23/only-22-afghans-resettled-in-uk-scheme-vulnerable-refugees-small-boats-channel

5https://refugeeweek.org.uk/

 ${\it °https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/93/human-rights-joint-committee/news/194241/inquiry-into-illegal-migration-bill-launched-home-secretary-asked-to-appear-before-committee/$

 ${\it 7} https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/illegal-migration-bill-committee-stage-house-commons-27-and-28$

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