



Integration in action



A BLUEPRINT FOR INTEGRATION

Peter Etherton, Director of Etherton Education, introduces his book *The Integration Handbook* (which is available free to independent schools) and explains why he wrote it

These Chinese students, they work really hard and get good grades. They're no trouble but they just stay together all the time. They won't join in the life of the school!"

This is a typical comment that I have heard many times from school staff. So, this is my next question: How do you try to integrate the different nationalities within your school?

The best schools in this respect have a raft of mechanisms for facilitating integration. Others, however, simply do nothing and assume that it is not their problem. We've given them a place, and now it's up to them, sink or swim.

But my feeling is that good integration is essential and you cannot assume it will happen by itself. It is morally right to help strangers adapt to your community and it makes commercial sense; your international students (and their parents and agents) will be happier and will recommend your school.

In our academic pre-sessional summer courses, we aim to prepare students for their next schools and integration is one of our core aims.

We start by raising the subject overtly at our first welcome talk and make it clear that all students are expected to make an effort to integrate with other nationalities. We then attempt to facilitate integration in all areas of

the course. Students are expected to share a room with other nationalities, group work in class mixes people up, dinner is structured so there is a native speaker of English on every table and teams for sports and social activities are always mixed. We flood the course with British student hosts, who are trained to intervene in national cliques and encourage communication across national barriers.

Thinking about the topic of integration has led me to try to write down my thoughts

can and should be employed. Another, to balance the 'top down' approach, is that there should be no integration without representation – it must be explained and all nationality groups must be consulted.

Other sections suggest that a school should have a written integration policy and plan. The induction process and subsequent mentoring is important. Integration ideas for the classroom, the boarding house and for extra-curricular activities are all reviewed.

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in a short book called *The Integration Handbook*. It is a resource book for the integration of overseas students into British boarding schools. It is practical and direct, not a tedious research project. And it is free.

I start by considering the people involved. Integration must get support from the top, the SMT. It should involve everyone in the school, especially the local British students. It is not just the duty of the overseas students to adapt – the Brits must do so too, and will benefit from a more international outlook.

The next section considers the principles that should guide integration. One theme here is that social engineering

The Integration Handbook was never intended as a commercial project. Since publication, we have given away hundreds of free copies and I am very pleased to say I have had many kind comments about it.

It is now available on Amazon, at cost price, or if you would like to write to me at peter@ethertoneducation.com I will be pleased to email you a PDF version.

I met up recently with two of our first Chinese students, who came to us in 2002. They are both now fund managers and, more importantly, well-integrated and citizens of the world. This is surely what we want for all our students.