

Department for Education

EQUALITY ANALYSIS

Title

King James Bible Project

Description of the policy

To mark the 400th anniversary year of the publication of the King James Bible, the Department for Education is sending an authentic copy to each state primary and secondary school in England in the summer term 2012. This will enable all pupils to understand its place in our nation's identity and history.

Engagement and Reflection

To ensure our purpose in distributing the King James Bible was clearly understood, we engaged with representatives of all faith groups including faith school providers, in advance of the announcement. We explained the purpose and rationale for sending the Bible to schools, emphasising the non-proselytising nature of our intentions, in order to avoid misunderstanding.

Below is a list of the organisations and faith school providers with whom we have been in contact:

Catholic Education Service for England and Wales
Church of England
Churches Together in England
Free Churches, United Reformed Church
Greek Orthodox
Guru Nanak Nishkam Education Trust
Hindu Council UK and Hindu Academy
I-Foundation (Hindu)
Leo Baeck College
Methodists
Network of Sikh Organisations
Quakers
UJIA
United Synagogue
Association of Muslim Schools (AMSUK)
Board of Deputies of British Jews
King James Bible Trust
Religious Education Council
7th Day Adventists

We have also contacted the following Government bodies:

The Scotland Office, and the Scottish Executive
The Northern Ireland Office
DCLG and the DCLG Faith Network
DCMS
DECC
MoJ
Home Office

No concerns have been raised by any of the above, but we note that some of the more Orthodox Jewish schools may not wish to have a copy of the King James Bible as it incorporates the New Testament. That said, the Board of Deputies of British Jews has not raised any specific concerns on this point.

Challenges and opportunities

The policy will enable pupils, whatever their faith or background, to understand the place of the King James Bible in our nation's culture and history. The story of the King James Bible, and its influence on the English speaking world, can help pupils - of all faiths and none - better appreciate our language and literature, history, democracy and culture.

As many people have noted - from former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion to the director of the British Museum Neil MacGregor – the King James Bible continues to shape our culture.

There is the risk that the policy could be portrayed as promoting the Christian faith and as an endorsement of one version of the Bible over another, even though this is not the intention. However, we are not sending a copy to every pupil which greatly reduces the scope for a non- Christian faith group to argue that it causes offence to those of another faith or no faith. Indeed the choice of a large lectern-sized facsimile, of high quality, may be welcomed by some non- Christian schools as an attractive addition to educational resources that they already use.

Equality analysis

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places an obligation on Ministers to have “due regard”, when making decisions, to the need –

- (1) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- (2) to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and
- (3) to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and

sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership. We consider that the most likely protected characteristic to be engaged by this policy is religion.

An adverse impact is unlikely. On the contrary, by sending the King James Bible to all schools, irrespective of faith, it has the potential to foster good relations between persons who share the protected characteristic and those who don't. In addition, a school's curriculum has to be relevant to pupils of all backgrounds, in accordance with their obligations under the Equality Act.

We have received a number of positive quotes in support of this project from various faith group representatives, including the Head Rabbi of Reform Judaism, the Chairman of Hindu Council (UK) and the Deputy Director of Catholic Education Service. The quotes are attached at **Annex A**.

We have also identified a number of case studies which demonstrate how schools have used the anniversary of the King James Bible to teach about its significance across the curriculum. The case studies will be published on the King James Bible webpage on the Department for Education's website. **Annex B** has four case studies which demonstrate how students have explored the influence of the King James Bible on modern English; turned well-known phrases from the King James Bible into song, poetry and drama; and created artwork based on stories within the Bible.

We believe that by sending a copy of the King James Bible to all state schools to mark its 400th anniversary we will engage the curiosity of pupils of all ages and backgrounds. We hope that schools will take this opportunity to encourage pupils to research the wealth of history behind the King James Bible. Such an opportunity will give all pupils an understanding of how and why the King James Bible has had such a profound influence on English culture.

Supportive Quotes

'I'm delighted that a copy of the King James Bible is to be given to every state school in the land. This is a fitting way of marking the seminal contribution this version of the Bible has made to our culture and symbolically places the King James Bible at the heart of the educational process which it inspired. I welcome this initiative most warmly.'

The Rt Revd John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford, Chair, Church of England Board of Education

“The King James Bible is an important part of British history and our literary heritage. Bringing it into schools across the country provides access to a fascinating artefact of that history as part of the multi-tonal religious landscape that is Britain today.”

Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Head Rabbi, Reform Judaism

“We would like to express our appreciation and support for the initiative of distributing copies of the King James's Bible to all schools in England to mark the occasion of its 400th anniversary. We Hindus respect all religions according to the tenet of 'sarva dharma samman or smabhava' (respect all religions equally) and therefore, scriptures of all religions are treated with respect. This principle of mutual respect amongst religions is vital in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society in today's Britain. We feel certain that all schools will benefit by this initiative.”

Dr. V. P. Narayan Rao, Chairman, Hindu Council (UK)

“We welcome the Government's decision to send a copy of the King James Bible to every school. Christianity has made a huge contribution to English history, language and culture and it is excellent news that one of the most popular English translations of the Bible should be made available to all children.”

Mr Greg Pope, Deputy Director, Catholic Education Service

“The King James Bible's influence on English culture, art and literature is unquestionable. It has played a key role in making English a world language and I find it fitting that it will now be distributed on its 400th anniversary to schools throughout England by the Department for Education. I hope it enables children of all faiths to discover the heritage and cultural legacy of their country and helps them to grow up in a peaceful, cohesive and tolerant society. On behalf of the Imams and Mosques Council UK, I warmly welcome this initiative.”

Maulana Mohammad Shahid Raza, Chairman, Imams and Mosques Council UK.

“It gives me real pleasure to write a few lines in support of the excellent initiative of the Department for Education to mark the 400th anniversary of the first publication of the King James Bible by giving a presentation copy to all pupils in primary and secondary schools throughout the country. It is a work of huge religious significance to Christians, Jews and Muslims, and in the beauty of language a treasured work of uplifting literature for people of all faiths.”

Lord Singh of Wimbledon, Director, Network of Sikh Organisations UK

Case Studies

Case Study One

King James Bible – still relevant to modern English

Sixth formers at Bacon's College in London have been exploring the enduring legacy of the King James Bible and its influence on modern English.

As part of their A-level studies in English Language, students have been examining how the nation's vocabulary has changed over the 400 years since the book was published.

Elizabeth James, Director of 6th Form, explains: "The King James Bible is a beautiful translation and the reason we chose to study the text was because of its relevance to the modern, contemporary English lexicon. We used it to explore a whole range of archaic vocabulary and syntax in relation to their modern equivalents.

"Even though the King James Bible was published 100 years earlier than the texts our students usually study, there is absolutely a value in them understanding the position of inflections in the language and looking at the way vocabulary has changed over time and the subtle differences between translations."

One A-level student at the college was inspired to use the King James Bible as the basis for her 2,500-word research project in English Language.

"She chose to look at 1 Corinthians 13 in the King James Bible and has drawn some extraordinary conclusions about the intended audience and the didactic value of the text," said Elizabeth.

The King James Bible was the focus of a year of activities at Bacon's College, with students looking at the text as part of their Citizenship programme and using this particular version in all college assemblies.

As the college is a culturally diverse institution with students from a range of ethnic, social and faith backgrounds, it was important for staff to put the book into context.

"For our Citizenship programme we placed the King James Bible into the context of 'sacred texts' and we compared its translation with that of the Qur'an," said Elizabeth.

For four students at Bacon's College, the cultural legacy of the King James Bible has a more personal meaning after they gave a presentation to 400 invited guests during the launch of the quatercentenary celebrations at

Banqueting Hall in Whitehall.

“They were personally introduced to the Duke of Edinburgh,” added Elizabeth. “Each student chose a verse from the King James Bible which meant something to them as a 17 or 18 year old. For example, one young woman spoke about mediation and another about how the Bible defines dance, singing and music making,” added Elizabeth.

“Our sixth formers also acted as ushers for the final service at Westminster Abbey. That was a truly memorable experience for them – it was amazing.”

Case Study Two

Bible idioms recited in rhyme and rap

Children at a school named after King James found some highly creative ways to mark the 400th anniversary of the bible he commissioned.

Year 7 students at King James’s School in Almondbury, near Huddersfield, captured well-known phrases from the bible and turned them into song, poetry and drama.

They also used textile techniques to create a huge felt collage depicting the production of the King James Bible which is on display at the school.

The artistic activity was part of a week-long celebration of the influential book undertaken by around 60 children from King James’s and a similar number from Moor End Academy in nearby Crosland Moor.

King James's School has been in existence, on the same site, for hundreds of years and was granted a royal charter by King James in 1608.

Jacqui Armitage, associate assistant headteacher, explained: “With the King James Bible being such an iconic object and our school being named after King James, we thought we would do some work around the 400th anniversary of the book.

“We ran assemblies prior to the project so that the students were aware of the importance of the King James Bible and its influence on our culture and society.”

The students took idioms from the bible and produced and performed their own rhymes and raps, which were videoed by a local film company and shown at a community event.

They also did some drama based on the idioms ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ and ‘An eye for an eye’, and created a huge mosaic finished with felting and calligraphy spelling out ‘King James Bible’.

The students enjoyed taking part in a session to discuss the meaning of idioms such as 'Spare the rod and save the child' which they applied to the modern-day setting of a storyline from *Coronation Street*.

"We had a great time and the evaluation from the students was fantastic across both schools," said Jacqui. "Putting the two sets of students together for this project meant that, ethnically and social-economically, we had a very mixed group. The activity helped to break down barriers among the students, get them working together in teams, and promote diversity."

Later this summer the school will set up a garden of remembrance with oak benches on which phrases from the King James Bible will be carved. And, as part of a design technology project in the autumn, students will make a cross for the local community which will have inscriptions from the King James Version.

Case Study Three

Cultural creators have whale of a time

Students inspired by the King James Bible created artwork and wrote poems based on the story of Jonah and the whale.

Around 30 Year 8 students from the City of London Academy in Southwark displayed drawings and performed their own poems as part of the City of London's celebration of the 400th anniversary of the publication of the historically important book.

The group started their project, part of the Livery Companies Young Cultural Creators Education Programme, in November 2010 when they visited the Guildhall Library to view an original copy of the King James Bible and hear the story of how it was printed and published in 1611.

Over the next four months, the students worked with poet and playwright Rommi Smith in a series of workshops during which they drew pictures, created objects and wrote, recorded, edited and performed their own poems inspired by the theme of Jonah and the whale.

Carl Fazackerley, Head of Humanities at the academy, said the project aimed to encourage the group to explore their creative talents.

"The King James Bible is a very beautiful book and was an ideal tool to use for this project," he said. "The students chose verses from the book which were meaningful to them and with Rommi's help they experimented with different ideas and resources to produce pictures and write poems."

The project culminated in May 2011 when the students joined children from three secondary schools and two primary schools at an event at the Guildhall where their work was exhibited as part of a giant art installation commemorating the anniversary of the King James Bible. The group also

performed their poems in front of an audience of dignitaries from across the city.

“The students engaged very well with the project,” said Mr Fazackerley. “They were very proud of their work and they enjoyed performing.”

Case Study Four

A day to remember for Camden primary school pupils

Children at an inner city primary school in London are still talking about the day the Queen visited them as part of the King James Bible anniversary celebrations.

Two Year 6 pupils at St Mary and St Pancras Primary School in Somers Town, Camden, read passages from the King James Bible and were featured in the Queen’s Christmas Message broadcast on television in December 2010.

It was a real boost for the 230 children at the school which is in one of the most deprived wards of Camden and has a very diverse intake, with more than 30 different languages spoken among the pupils there.

The school worked closely with the King James Bible Trust to organise Her Majesty’s visit. She posed in front of a Christmas tree while pupils Becky Cho and AJ LeMaitre read about the Nativity (Luke 2). Their readings were also videoed for a complete reading of the King James Bible on YouTube.

Head of School Alice Aharon said: “It was a fantastic experience for the children – some didn’t believe it was actually the Queen! They really cherished the experience – as did the staff - and they are still talking about it.”

On the day, the pupils were joined by others from their federated school, Emmanuel in West Hampstead, children from three other primary schools in the area, and local dignitaries. Some of the children put on a music and dance performance for the Queen who also toured the classrooms.

Alice added: “It was a big community event and a day we will always treasure.”

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