

## **Plan and develop your organisation**

### **Work with other organisations**

#### **Tamil Cultural Association**

### **Silver Quality Framework Award pilot 2006**

#### **National Excellence Awards**

#### **Shortlisted 2008**

#### **Background:**

Tamil Cultural Association started in 1984 as a mother tongue school. Their main aim was to teach children Tamil, their mother tongue. The school operates on weeknights and Saturdays, teaching the Tamil language, as well as supporting the mainstream school in Maths, English and Science lessons. Meeting Siva Pillai, the school's coordinator is a pleasure. He is a strong positive force to be around. His energy and enthusiasm for teaching is overpowering. He talks so fast and is so animated about his work that you can't help but also share his enthusiasm for the work he is doing. 'We felt children needed to know their heritage language and culture so we built up this school, ' he says by way of introduction about the school's work.

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After the school had developed their course curriculum, they made links with the local primary school in order to secure premises and a consistent learning environment. They moved their classes into Downtree Primary School in Bromley. Parents who can't speak English also joined in. They didn't know how to communicate with tutors and teachers in the primary school. Siva thought of starting up a project to do something about this, to promote understanding between parents and teachers about their children. He put together a parents' evening to show how they could contribute to a mainstream school. They wanted to learn English and ICT so on Friday mornings they started to come in for a breakfast club. Meanwhile, in the evenings their children learn Tamil.

Tamil Cultural Association gives a lot of importance to the Quality Framework and establishing local networks to give their children the best possible environment to learn in. By teaching Tamil using the same systems as a mainstream school, they are able to give it authenticity and resonance, rather than make it seem amateur.

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There is a strong partnership between the mainstream school and the supplementary school. The primary school head-teacher is fully supportive of their work. The school uses Downtree's premises to run their Tamil classes. This gives them the ability to teach the Tamil language in a school environment with the benefits of all the school's resources, which include interactive whiteboards, pens papers and books. Thus, children do not see any difference between learning Tamil and learning French. It is treated with the same attitude and importance. The school follows a National Curriculum framework for Tamil, which was developed in conjunction with CILT. This structure for teaching is what allows the mainstream school to be so supportive of their work. The school teaches maths, science and English in a mixture of Tamil and English to help break down the language barriers for pupils. This raises the pupils' attainment in mainstream education, as well as their bilingual awareness.

The reaction from Downtree Primary School to this work has been positive. The school approaches them whenever it needs help or guidance. Siva feels that Downtree Primary School is like their mother school. They offer their premises and resources for free. They fund some of the language tutors as well. This is a special relationship the two schools enjoy.

Siva says

*It is important for children to know their mother tongue because of their heritage. When they get older, they will want to explore their roots. They will have an early foundation. Introduce to them at an early stage to where they are from, what country they are from, what language they speak, the root of their family and this will be helpful for them when they grow up.*

If they don't know their identity they find it harder to know who they are and express themselves. This feeds into their integration into British society. People are no longer isolated. By learning on two platforms. They are proud of their language and culture, but also know about British culture and society.

### **Top Tips**

- You must talk to your local primary and secondary schools and explain to them what you want. Frame what you want to teach in a professional way to engage them, show them the actual output of the work in educational terms. Approach them with the right terminology.
- Don't work in isolation. Make sure you're not duplicating services. Amalgamate with similar organisations. Share resources. Share the workload. Set up a network system to share ideas across different platforms.