

Race representation in school senior leadership teams isn't just important — it's essential.

Speech delivered at the diversity in leadership graduating class of 2025.

When the leadership of a school reflects the diversity of its student body, it sends a powerful message: you belong here. Representation at the top shows students of all backgrounds that their identity is not a barrier to success, but something valued and respected.

There is something special and intangible about feeling like you belong. It means to feel safe, seen and advocated for. It is truly inspiring to see diversity in school senior leadership to find positive role models. There is so much comfort in being able to see yourself in authoritative figures who understand you, challenge you – and push you to excel.

But this isn't just about students of colour. Diverse leadership benefits all students. It brings a variety of perspectives to decision-making, making schools more culturally aware, inclusive, and responsive. It challenges unconscious bias and helps create policies that are fairer and more effective for everyone.

When students see leaders who look like them and share parts of their experience, it builds motivation and ambition. It breaks down stereotypes and opens new ways of thinking — both for staff and students.

Representation is not a tick-box exercise. It's about justice and ensuring that schools prepare every student for the diverse world beyond the classroom. Most importantly, it creates trust. Trust built between students, parents and wider communities who feel like they have a voice to relate to and rely on. It makes me feel safe and excited that the future of senior leadership teams in schools is left in your hands.

To conclude, diverse leadership makes schools stronger. And when you, as leaders reflect us, you give us the chance to all rise.

Thank you and congratulations.

Delivered by a year 12 student at Twyford Church of England High School

