



## Teacher

**Amra Duherich** came to the UK in 1992 from Bosnia where she was a teacher and interpreter. She now teaches Maths at Walthamstow School for girls and is also head of its Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) department, which works to raise the literacy and achievement of students from ethnic minorities.

### **Tell us about what you do**

My main focus is working with bilingual students who have difficulties with language or learning. The EMAG department provides one-to-one support for students from ethnic minorities whose first language isn't English. I also do some mainstream Maths teaching.

### **How did you start teaching in the UK?**

I trained as a teacher in Bosnia so my qualification wasn't recognised here. At first I worked as a bilingual instructor, a kind of unqualified teacher, with people newly arrived in the UK. Through that job I went on to do an Overseas

Teacher Training Course which is a route into mainstream teaching for people who qualified abroad.

### **Was it difficult to qualify?**

At times it was very frustrating; even though I had a degree in English and a teaching qualification I couldn't work as a teacher. I had the same skills as my colleagues but their qualifications were recognised and mine weren't. I was determined though and always reminded myself that I had stayed alive and that things could be a lot worse.

### **How does being a refugee influence your work?**

My experience of moving to a new country and settling in helps me to empathise with my students. I understand their worries and how they might feel; because I learnt English myself I know how to teach it to others.

### **How can we improve the public perception of refugees and asylum seekers?**

Education is important. There's a lot of negative publicity about refugees in the media and young people can be influenced early on. Events like Refugee Week raise awareness and need to be publicised more to reach a wider audience.

### **What are you doing for Refugee Week?**

Every year I organise a photography workshop called 'World through my eyes'. It's great for students who find it hard to express themselves in English as they can show their community from their own perspective. It really captures the multi-ethnic nature of the school and the area.

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