



# SURVEY REPORT

Does racism exist in the  
English education system?



Written By  
*Justice 4 You*

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# OVERVIEW

Justice 4 You is a youth-led campaign group that wants to see racial inequality eradicated from our classrooms and curriculum.

To inform our campaign, we have surveyed just over 200 of our peers in our schools, sixth forms and universities; and we've also taken to the streets on multiple occasions to ask young people about their experiences of racism in education. We hope that by demonstrating a commitment to informing the debate we can secure support to survey a representative sample of the population at a scale that enables us to conduct rigorous intersectional analysis.

In addition to the survey, we've also worked with our schools to review and diversify our curriculum. We've included one example as a case study as we hope that our peers who read this report feel inspired and emboldened to have conversations with their teachers and headteachers, so that they can work together to eradicate racism and racial inequality in our classrooms and curriculum.

## Justice 4 You

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**"There were three of us with minority ethnic names. Instead of the teacher trying to learn how to pronounce our names, she called us by our first initial."**



# SUMMARY

## KEY FINDINGS

- 27% of respondents have experienced racism from their teachers and / or other students.
- 38% of respondents have witnessed other students being subject to racism.
- 75% of respondents who had experienced or witnessed racist incidents have not reported them.
- 7% of those who reported racist incidents felt that their school/institution's response provided them with justice.
- 62% of respondents believe the curriculum is not sufficiently diverse.
- 46% of Black/Black British respondents stated that the curriculum lacks diversity compared with 35% of white respondents, though this is a higher percentage than for the Asian/Asian British and Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Group respondents.
- 51% of respondents feel that their culture and ethnicity are reflected within the diversity of their teaching staff.

## WE CAN DO BETTER



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Teacher training

Respondents of our survey strongly advocated for teacher training so that teachers understand the impact of their actions on marginalised students and feel equipped to take action if students experience a racist incident. This should start with Initial Teacher Training and be developed through CPD.

### 2. Zero tolerance culture

There should be ZERO tolerance of racism in education settings. To make this a reality students and teachers should have open conversations about race and racism, including discussions about microaggressions and cultural sensitivity.

### 3. Improve reporting

Conduct further research to identify barriers to reporting racist incidents; and identify and share examples of best practice to support schools to create a culture where reporting is encouraged and racist incidents are dealt with transparently.

### 4. Accountability

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies need to be robust and rigorously assessed by OFSTED.

### 5. Teacher & Student Agency

Celebrate schools that diversify their curricula. Encourage teacher and student agency by seeking their input on topics and asking them about their experience of teaching and being taught a broader range of perspectives.





## SURVEY RESULTS



### HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED RACISM IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM?

Students who identify as 'other ethnic group', such as Arab, were the most likely to say they'd been subject to racism by a teacher and white students were least likely. Some examples of racism from teachers experienced by our respondents included:

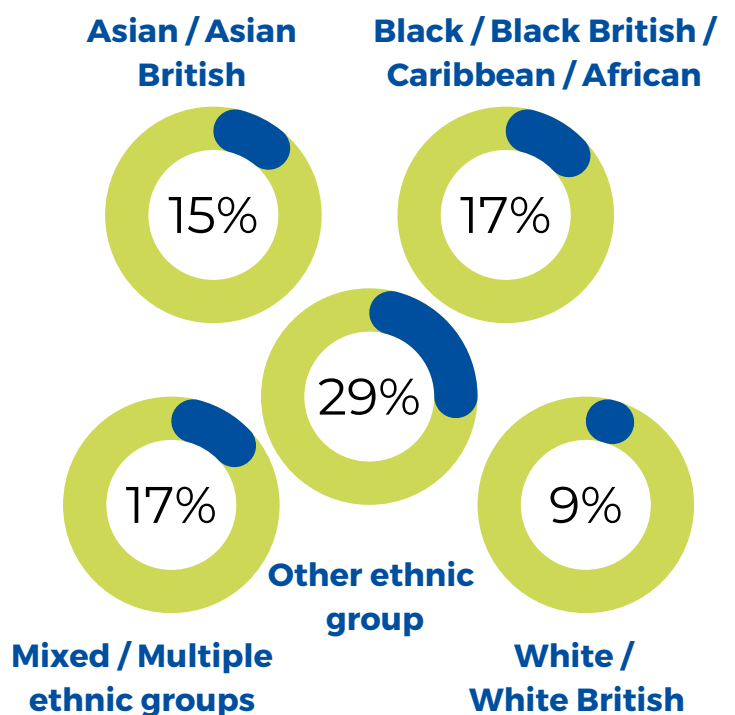
"At school a teacher mixed me up with the only other Asian student in the class (even though we look nothing alike) and never bothered to actually learn our names / that we were different people whereas they remembered everyone else's name in the class."

"Being asked if I was forced to wear hijab by teacher."

**"In year 4 was told I can't be an angel in the xmas play because dark skinned boys were the slaves for the kings."**

"High school - my Head scarf (Hijab) was falling off during my class when I had an exam and I asked to go to the toilet leaving ALL my stuff in the class including my Phone and notes, my teacher said no you can live with it and I ended up walking out and then getting a detention for ignoring teachers' words. They called my parents in and only then did the Headteacher listen to me and it was never sorted."

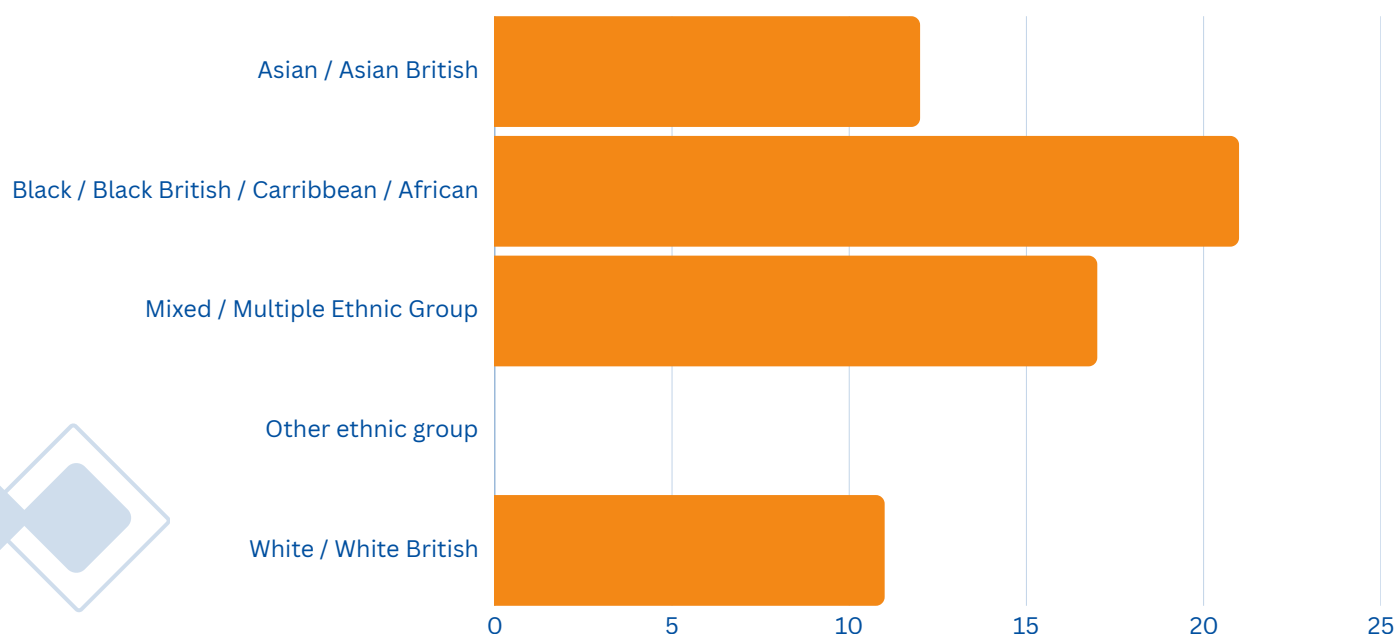
Yes, I have been subject to discrimination by teachers



The majority of students had not been subject to racism from a teacher. Of those that had, a number reported teachers making 'jokes' that were offensive and making remarks that did not respect the student's values and beliefs, or their names.



## Yes, I have seen others be subject to discrimination by teachers (%)

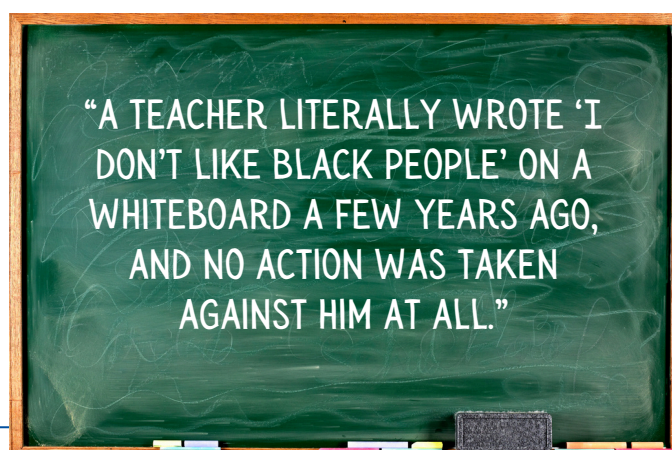


Over 1 in 5 Black / Black British / Black Caribbean / Black African respondents reported seeing their peers being subject to racial discrimination by teachers compared with just over 1 in 10 Asian / Asian British and White / White British respondents.

Many of the comments from students gave examples of ethnic minority students being treated differently to their white peers. In particular, being disciplined more harshly. There were also several examples of racist incidents by teachers where the student who witnessed the event was not sure whether it was intended to be offensive or whether the teacher just lacked awareness about their behaviour. **We need more student-teacher dialogue about these incidents.**

“In some situations it's hard to tell whether something that happened was bad enough to talk about or take action against, but sometimes teachers have made jokes about peoples' race or culture. A lot of the time we all just find it funny and it's not a big deal but there are times when it's gone too far and left us feeling a bit uncomfortable.”

There were very few, but still some, examples of racism from teachers that were not ambiguous, or could be given the benefit of doubt about their intention.



# FURTHER EXAMPLES

“In my opinion the worst cases of racism were targeted at Romani or Traveller people. One day there was a gathering for the funeral of two Romani men in the town my school was in, and the school held an assembly about “safety” when walking around town and the entire school spent the day viciously stereotyping one of the most marginalised groups in the UK.”

- “A teacher was severely racist in general making a joke out of a culture, he then directed this to an individual in the class. We reported this behaviour, yet nothing was done straight away, he wasn’t there the next term, but I’m not sure if this is linked to the report.”
- “I have seen others experience racism. Normally in a joking fashion but this is still not acceptable as it shows that it's been become ingrained in society as not being such a bad thing.”
- “Some teachers often mix up the names of students of the same race even after dozens of lessons.”

## RECOMMENDATION

Respondents of our survey strongly advocated for teacher training so that teachers understand the impact of their actions on marginalised students and feel equipped to take action if students experience a racist incident. This should start with Initial Teacher Training and be developed through CPD.

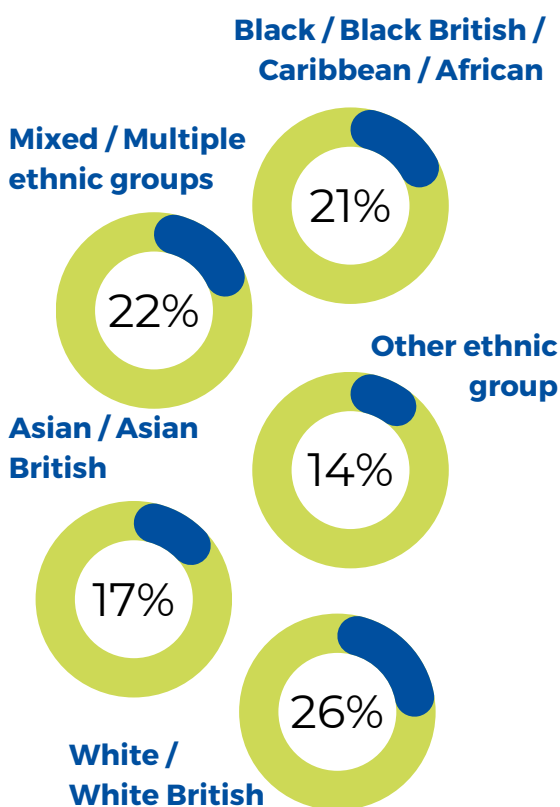
In total 27% of respondents had experienced racism whilst in an education setting and 38% have witnessed a racist incident. The manifestation and outcomes differ. But our survey finds that racism is still prevalent in education settings.

**These examples highlight a lack of cultural and religious sensitivity amongst teachers; and a lack of feedback from schools after incidents are reported. Teachers need to be leaders in tackling racism, if teachers display blatant racism and more frequently microaggressions it sends a message to all students about their relative worth and importance. Schools must be a place where students are not treated differently because of their race, cultural identity or religion. Instead, schools have a responsibility to teach respect and tolerance as fundamental values of our society.**





## YES, I'VE SEEN OTHERS BE SUBJECT TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION BY OTHER STUDENTS.



**At school, some people were saying to a Chinese girl that her family probably have COVID because of their nationality.**

By spending time with others, we learn to understand and appreciate them, and as a result of this new appreciation and understanding, prejudice should diminish.

A recent review identifies twenty-seven randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that investigate this hypothesis. Overall, these studies found that contact reduces prejudice. In their book 'Good economics for Hard Times' Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo argue that if this is right, schools and universities are key to tackling racism as they bring together young people from different backgrounds in a single location, at an age when everyone is much more plastic [3].

## RECOMMENDATION

There should be ZERO tolerance of racism in education settings. To make this a reality students and teachers should have open conversations about race and racism, including discussions about microaggressions and cultural sensitivity,





# CASE STUDIES

In one large US university, where roommates were assigned at random, a study found that white students who happened to end up with African American roommates were significantly more likely to endorse affirmative action to tackle racism, and that white students assigned roommates from any minority group were more likely to continue to interact socially with members of other ethnic groups after their first year, when they had full freedom in choosing whom to associate with [4].



In 2007, elite private schools in Delhi were required to offer places to students in low-income households. In a study of the impact of this policy change, randomly chosen children were given the responsibility to select teammates for a relay race. Some of them attended schools that had already admitted children from low-income households, and some attended schools that had not done so yet. To help them decide who they wanted to partner with in the race, they were all given a chance to observe everyone else run a test race.

## OBSERVATION

Education institutes have an important role to play in tackling racism, as does the education system in its entirety. These examples show just as racism is learnt, it can be dismantled.

There was, however, a catch. They had to agree to have a playdate with whomever they picked for their team. The study found that those students from affluent families who had not been exposed to 'poor students' in their school avoided picking them, even when they were better runners, to avoid having to spend time with them. But those who'd had some exposure to children from less-well-off families in their schools, thanks to the new policy, were much more likely to pick the best runner even if the child was from a low-income household, because the prospect of a playdate was no longer all that daunting [5].







## HAVE YOU EVER REPORTED RACISM TO YOUR TEACHER, UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR OR OTHER MEMBER OF STAFF AT SCHOOL, COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY?



Three-quarters of respondents had not reported the racism they'd seen or experienced in our education system. This HUGE level of under-reporting is concerning and suggests that any reporting conducted by schools based on incidents that are flagged is only the tip of the iceberg.

Of those who had reported what they'd seen or experienced 15% had reported it once and 10% had reported it multiple times. We did not find a significant difference in whether reporting was higher if the incident involved a teacher or another student, or someone had experienced racism firsthand or witnessed racism.

We would like to explore why this is the case and develop guides from what we learn to help schools to ensure their procedures and culture encourage students to report racist incidents.

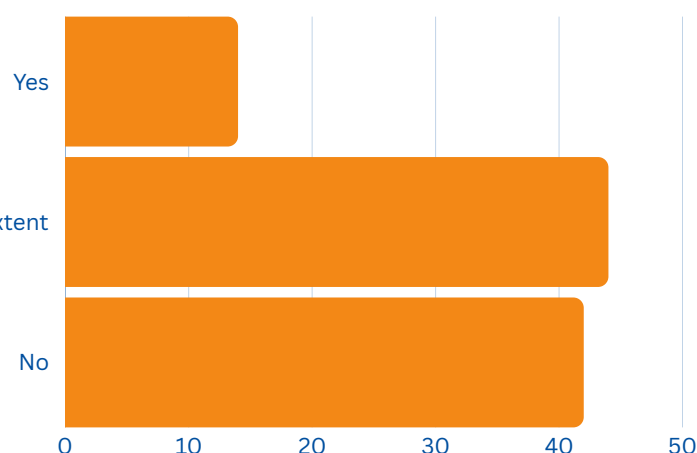
### RECOMMENDATION

Conduct further research to identify barriers to reporting racist incidents; and identify and share examples of best practice to support schools to create a culture where reporting is encouraged and racist incidents are dealt with transparently.



**ONLY 1 IN 4  
RESPONDENTS  
REPORTED RACISM.**

If you answered yes to reporting a racist incident, did you feel that the response from your school provide you with justice?



**Only 7% of respondents who reported a racist incident felt that the response from their school provided them with justice. 44% said the response had provided them with justice to an extent and 42% said it had not provided them with justice.**

We broke this down to assess whether students were more or less likely to feel a response had been just if it the concern they raised was in relation to a teacher or another student.

## RECOMMENDATION

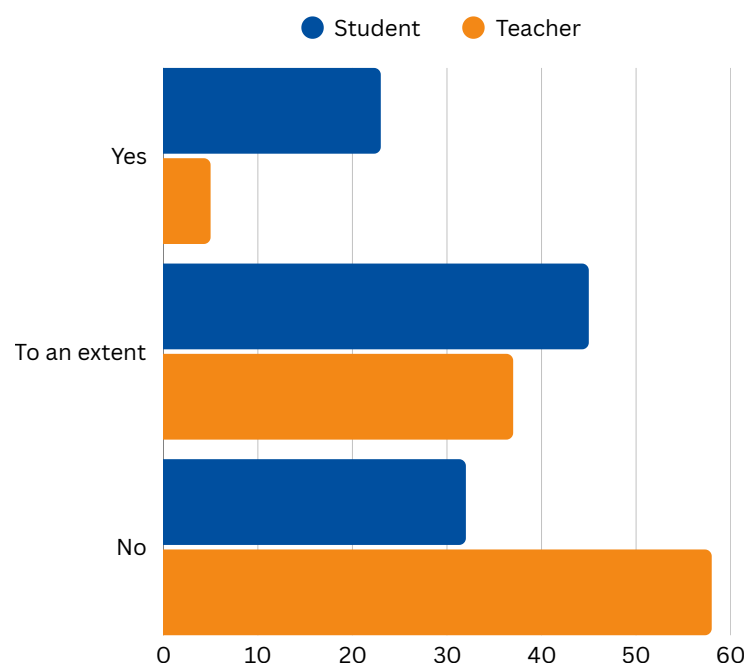
These findings demonstrate that a school's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy needs to include:

- routes for students and teachers to raise concerns;
- what will happen in response and how this will be communicated; and
- how incidents and responses are recorded.

These must be included in OFSTED assessments.

We contacted OFSTED about this and this was their response:

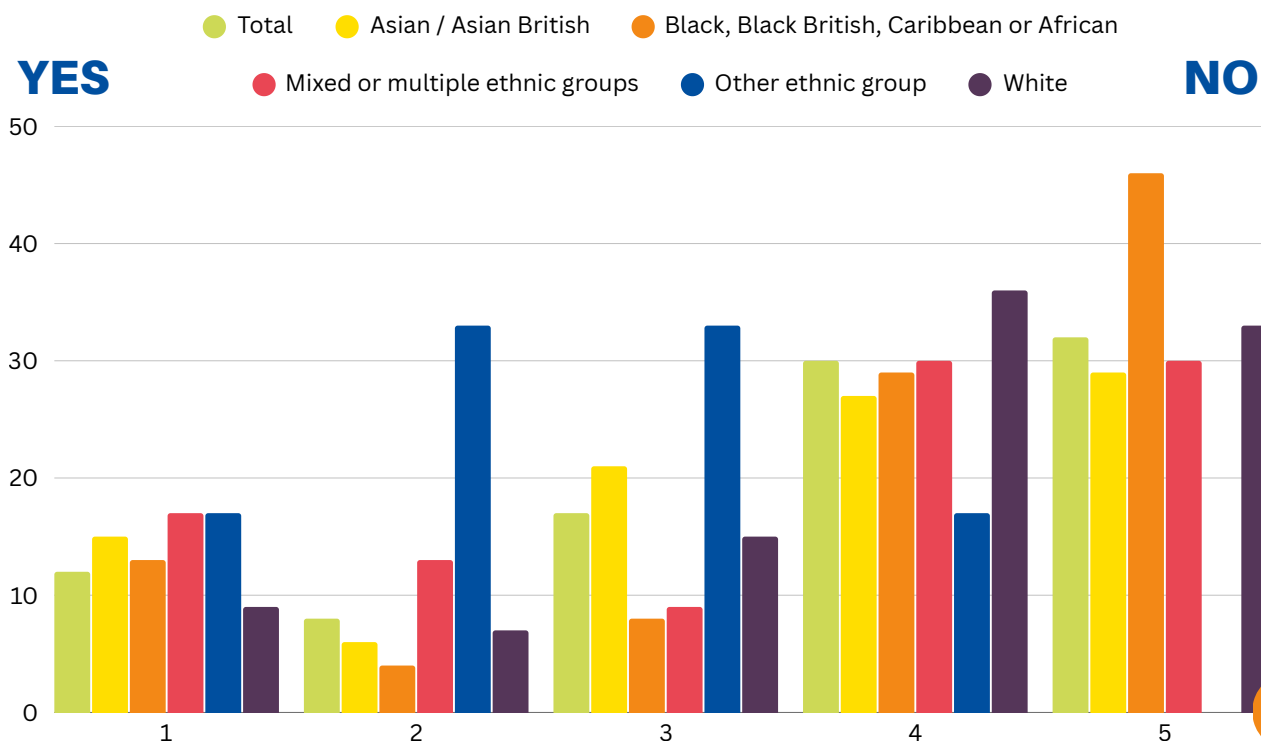
"The personal development judgement focuses on the factors that research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to pupils' personal development. These include how the school ensures an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, and where no discrimination exists, for example in respect of wider opportunities for pupils. Inspectors will assess the extent to which the provider complies with the relevant legal duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010 including, where relevant, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Human Rights Act 1998. Where relevant, this will be reported in individual school inspection reports."



As you can see from this chart respondents were more likely to think that the response from their school was just when the concern raised was about a student compared with when the concern raised was in relation to a teacher. We appreciate that the teacher may have been reprimanded and the school did not feel it was appropriate to share their actions with students, but this demonstrates to us the importance of having a process that supports those who raise racist incidents.



# DO YOU THINK THE CURRICULUM IS SUFFICIENTLY DIVERSE IN RELATION TO RACE AND ETHNICITY?

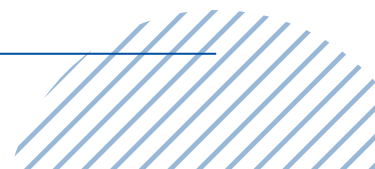


Respondents were asked whether they believe the curriculum is sufficiently diverse in relation to race and ethnicity, or whether it requires improvement. We felt it was important to provide a neutral option for this question to ensure that potential respondents were not discouraged from participating given the sensitivity of the topic. Therefore we asked respondents to rate their views on a scale of 1-5 , where 1 is sufficiently diverse and 5 is not sufficiently diverse.

Overall, 32% of respondents selected 5 on the scale, 30% selected 4, 16% selected 3 and remained neutral, 8% selected 2 and 12% selected 1.

We evaluated whether someone's ethnicity resulted in a different response:

- The group that believed that the current curriculum requires the most improvement are amongst Black / Black British respondents with over 46% answering 5, and only 12% answering 1.
- The ethnic group that believed the current curriculum is sufficiently diverse was amongst Mixed respondents with over 17% answering 1. However, a significant proportion, over 30%, believed it required improvement.
- 35% of white respondents stated that the curriculum requires improvement. This is higher than for Asian / Asian British and Mixed / multiple ethnic groups respondents.
- White / White British respondents also had the lowest proportion of respondents that stated the curriculum is sufficiently diverse - just 8%.



# FURTHER ANALYSIS



These findings suggest that a desire to diversify the curriculum is not confined to ethnic minority students, but represents a general consensus amongst the younger generation.

A second important implication of these results is that campaigning matters. Black history has been at the forefront of discussions on diversity in education with thanks to the success of Black History Month and other 'Black curriculum' advocates. The success of these campaigners led to the Government announcing in March 2022 that

"To help pupils understand the intertwined nature of British and global history, and their own place within it, the Department for Education will work with history curriculum experts, historians and school leaders to develop a Model History curriculum by 2024 that will stand as an exemplar for a knowledge-

rich, coherent approach to the teaching of history. The Model History Curriculum will help teachers and schools to develop their own school curriculum fully using the flexibility and freedom of the history national curriculum and the breadth and depth of content it includes. [6]"

But history is not the only subject that requires diversification. English Literature reading lists, the scientists and inventors we learn about and the way we're taught about geopolitics and the economy should all be taught through a variety of lenses and with a conscious effort to bring to life examples that are not only about, or from the perspective of white men.

## RECOMMENDATION

Develop more ethnically diverse Model Curricula for all subjects and Key Stages.





# CASE STUDY: OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL, MAIDSTONE

We agree with the Government that it is imperative schools diversify their own curriculum. There are a number of advantages to this strategy:

1. Teachers will be able to include students in the conversation, meaning they can adapt the curriculum whilst simultaneously increasing student agency. This gives both ethnic minority and White British students the chance to feel better represented by their curriculum and like they've had a say in what they learn.
2. Secondly, teachers' own agency will increase; they will have the space to teach content based on their expertise, interests and reflecting their school's community. This would lead to lessons that are more impactful, whilst still adhering to national standards.

Following outreach by a Justice 4 You campaigner who was a student at the school, Oakwood Park Grammar School (OPGS) made changes to its Key Stage 3 History Curriculum.

In Year 7, individual lessons on cultural diversity are now integrated throughout the year, alongside a dedicated term to the British reaction to migrants. This means that not only do students get the benefit of rigorously studying a culturally diverse topic, but they also experience a longer-term and more subtle exposure to racial history.

In Year 8, students conduct an in-depth study on the sugar trade. Having culturally diverse in-depth studies is important, because it allows students to spend more time engaging with a wide range of evidence, primary sources and historiographical interpretations.

This allows students to trace cause and effect, which is important when understanding Britain's role in shaping the world and the impact Britain has had on different groups of people throughout history. Students learn how exploitation emerged and apply this knowledge to their understanding of racism and oppression under the sugar trade.

Another significant change in the Year 8 curriculum is that it addresses minority and indigenous agencies, such as reactions to British colonial rule from the: Indian Mutiny, the British Raj, Irish Home Rule campaigning and the Easter Rising, in their own right. This gives students the opportunity to examine both minority oppression and minority reactions to oppression, providing a more robust and representative teaching of history.



Students have reacted positively to these modules. In a survey of Year 8 students taken in May 2022, 80% agreed that 'it is important to learn about the lives of a range of people in the past'. One student commented that the topic that stood out to them was slavery "because it is something that caused a lot of prejudice and racism that is still around today", and 29% of students stated that they hope to learn more about British Empire and its legacy.

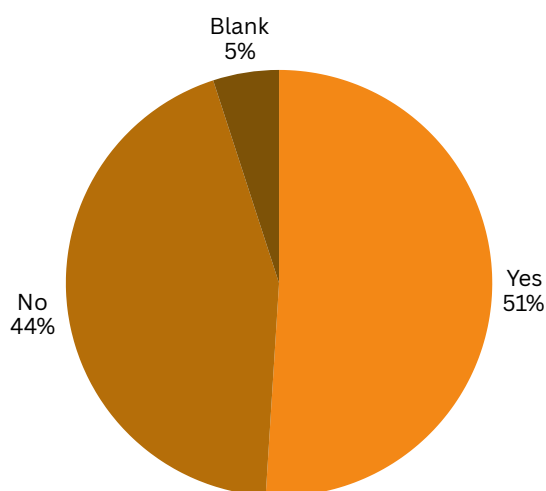
OPGS has created a model curriculum by threading cultural diversity throughout its teaching of history and by incorporating different learning styles, themes of study, historical approaches, and perhaps most importantly, applying this across a wide-range of races, cultures, religions, regions and time periods. This does not weaken the curriculum - it strengthens it by better preparing students to be critical and able to consider historical references from multiple perspectives. OPCS' KS3 history curriculum is an example of a successful movement towards cultural and racial diversity in education.

## RECOMMENDATION

Allow and celebrate schools that diversify their curricula. Encourage teacher and student agency by seeking their input on topics and asking them about their experience of teaching and being taught a broader range of perspectives.

### DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOUR ETHNICITY AND CULTURE ARE REFLECTED BY THE DIVERSITY OF TEACHING STAFF AT YOUR SCHOOL?

Over 51% voted yes, 44% voted no and 5% of respondents left the question blank. Hence, respondents were generally positive about their ethnicity and culture being reflected within the staff at their school. We looked at these results based on the respondents ethnicity and did not find a significant difference between ethnicities.



Asian / Asian British respondents were the most likely to say that they did not feel represented.

While ethnic minority students now represent 31% of the school population, just 7% of school leaders and 14% of teachers and teaching assistants have ethnic backgrounds in England; and 46% of schools in England had no racially diverse teachers [7].



## REFERENCES

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