

TITLE	Diversity and Equality at Schools
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2021
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To inform Committee Members of the Racial Equity in Schools programme being delivered by Wokingham Children's Services School Improvement Team in partnership with Wokingham schools.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee Members note the content of the report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The death of George Floyd in May 2020, and other race related incidents (current and historical at the time), sparked an international movement which became known as the Black Lives Matter movement.

The School Improvement Service as part of Learning, Achievement & Partnerships commenced a programme with schools to respond to the issue of Racial Equity in Schools.

Activity undertaken as part of this programme has included:

- The development of a Racial Equity in Schools Programme
- Roundtable discussions with Headteachers and school leaders
- Training courses for senior leaders, governors and staff
- Dissemination of resources to support activity related to racial equity.
- A survey of schools on racial equity

This report gives detail related to the above and sets out the intent to develop a Racial Equity in Schools Strategy for the Borough in partnership with schools and settings.

Background

On the 25th May 2020, an African-American man, George Floyd, was killed in the Powderhorn community of Minneapolis, Minnesota. While Floyd was handcuffed and lying face down on a city street during an arrest, a white American Minneapolis police officer, kept his knee on the right side of Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds; according to the criminal complaint against Chauvin, 2 minutes and 53 seconds of that time occurred after Floyd became unresponsive.

The death of George Floyd, and other race related incidents (current and historical at the time), sparked an international movement which became known as the Black Lives Matter movement.

As across the country, in Wokingham there were some community tensions and public sharing of experiences of people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some of these experiences related to ex-school children, current school children and some past and present teaching staff.

In addition to individual schools seeking to respond supportively to this sharing and challenge, the School Improvement Service as part of Learning, Achievement & Partnerships commenced a programme with schools to respond to the issue of Racial Equity in Schools.

Summer Term 2020

During the summer term of 2020 we instigated an initial communication with schools via our Education News and Governor Digest detailing a number of resources available to them to assist in supporting work with pupils following George Floyd's killing and the Black Lives Matter (BLM), protests.

We also met with a teacher who shared with us the letter she had written to her governors about her own experiences of racism and her views on how children in schools can be better equipped to understand racism and how schools can respond and move towards becoming anti-racist establishments. Through these meetings we discussed a number of plans for work with schools and the way in which the work should be approached.

Autumn Term 2020

During the Autumn term of 2020 as our work progressed we launched the Racial Equity in Schools programme, and worked with a number of schools and school leaders on the development of principles, aims and actions for the work. These were:

Principles:

Our principles are based on the way in which we want everyone engaged in the programme to operate. We were clear that as a system we needed to be humble in our approach and not be the 'professional expert', thus the principles underpinning this work are:

- Work in partnership with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic school staff, and others who have particular expertise in this area, listening to and learning from them
- Engage in this work with a genuine desire to effect change, mindful that doing this work without careful thought and genuine commitment risks causing further harm to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic school staff and children
- Work on our own understanding of racism and our personal role within a society in which there is systemic racism
- Encourage school staff to do this personal learning and reflection work themselves, and in discussion with their colleagues, as an essential foundation for working on racial equity in their school

Aims:

Our aims for this work are divided into three areas:

- Learning (racial literacy)
 - To develop young people and school (and LA) staff who are aware of their unconscious racial bias and work to be actively anti-racist - a positive force for social justice
 - To develop school curriculums that are fully inclusive of people of colour and their role in British history and culture, and in subjects across the curriculum, and which present a positive and rounded picture of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people
 - For children and school (and LA) staff to understand the history that has led to today's multiracial Britain, and the presence of people of colour in Britain throughout our history
 - For children and school (and LA) staff to understand the ways in which racism (including systemic racism) works and the history related to it. (School/LA staff and older children to have understanding of terms such as white supremacy and white privilege)
- Outcomes for pupils, staff and parents
 - For children from all racial groups to achieve at least as well as White British children, and to leave our schools confident and articulate
 - For children from all racial groups to receive, proportionately, no more sanctions for behaviour, and exclusions, than White British children
 - For all children, staff and parents to feel comfortable and happy in our schools and able to be their authentic selves – part of the school community
- Workforce.
 - For our children to be taught by a racially diverse teaching staff
 - For a representative proportion of our schools to be led by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic headteachers, senior leaders and governors so that school provision is shaped by people of colour, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children have leadership role models

Whilst these aims are ambitious we believe this is appropriate if we really want to see change. They are long term.

The purpose of developing these aims, principles and actions was to pin down what we think the work actually is and what we should call it. We were mindful that, because this is a difficult subject, unless we're very clear about what the work is, we and our schools

could easily miss doing the work that really needs to be done to make a difference. Because having conversations about this work can be uncomfortable, it is easy for conversations to become diluted and diverted.

It was decided to use the term ‘racial equity’ to label this work. We have used the word ‘equity’ for some time in relation to work across the borough to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, so it is a term that our schools are familiar with. We liked the fact that equity involves working to understand and to give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy and happy lives. It requires consciously reviewing and amending the elements of provision to enable social justice.

During the course of the Autumn Term we continued to engage with schools through thematic roundtable discussions with headteachers and through the Head Teacher and Governor briefing sessions held that term.

We also undertook an end of autumn term Racial Equity Survey to which 32 schools completed the survey. Key responses were:

“Following the renewed focus on racism around the world as a result of George Floyd’s killing and the Black Lives Matter protests, to what extent have teaching staff at your school been engaging in learning, personal reflection and discussion about racism?”

- Not at all yet 6
- Not involving all teaching staff but some interested staff have been doing this work 9
- We have started some work on this involving all teaching staff 11
- We have done quite a lot of work on this involving all teaching staff 4
- Other comments



“To what extent do you feel confident to lead staff in learning, personal reflection and discussion about racism?”

- Very confident 6
- Reasonably confident 14
- Not very confident 8
- Not at all confident 4



Spring Term 2021:

During this spring term we are delivering two half day training sessions in March with Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) to support us to develop a strategy for our work with schools going forward. The whole WBC School Improvement team attended the first of these (at the point of writing this report), together with others representing different stakeholders: governors, headteachers, deputies and teachers. We also ensured that one of the council's equalities leads also attended so that we can ensure our programme is linked with borough-wide work.

In addition to this work, three workshops for school staff and governors have been arranged, to be led by Amjad Ali, a local senior leader, consultant and founder member of the BAMEed Network. The first of these will take place on the 29th March; the second will be in the first half of the summer term, and the third in the second part of the summer term. We are encouraging attendees to come to all three, as each will build on the previous one.

The sessions will enable participants to:

- develop their understanding of racial equity
- develop their ability to have conversations about racial equity with colleagues in school, and to facilitate their colleagues' learning and thinking

To date, around 45 teachers/ HTs have requested invitations to the workshops.

Future plans

The survey suggests there is a great range of expertise in our schools, including some leaders who feel they have expertise but who may not have engaged in the necessary personal reflection and learning that we feel is required to do this work effectively. We will continue to share the practice of schools who are approaching this work with staff personal learning and reflection as the foundation.

Following the two sessions with RISC, we will produce a draft strategy for our future work with schools. The draft will be shared with stakeholders for their comments.

As part of the strategy, we will want to support the sharing of good practice between schools. We have learnt that there are several teachers in our schools who are very passionate about this work, are leading excellent work in their schools, and are keen to be involved in the LA work.

Analysis of Issues

In terms of outcomes, we know that currently in Wokingham some minority ethnic groups are over-represented in exclusions data (fig 1. 2018/19 data return), and that there are some groups whose academic achievement is a concern. We also know that a high number of children from some minority ethnic groups are known to Wokingham Children's Social Care. We know from teacher and student voice that not all children and staff feel comfortable and happy and able to be their authentic selves in our schools.

Fig 1. Ethnicity Breakdown across Wokingham Schools 2018/19

Characteristic	2018/19 total in WBC	2018/19 WBC fixed_excl (numbers)	2018/19 WBC fixed_excl_ (percentage)
Ethnicity Minor Any other Asian background	527	*	0.2%
Ethnicity Minor Any other black background	117	8	6.8%
Ethnicity Minor Any Other Ethnic Group	256	5	2.0%
Ethnicity Minor Any other Mixed background	673	11	1.6%
Ethnicity Minor Any other white background	1579	14	0.9%
Ethnicity Minor Bangladeshi	110	*	0.9%
Ethnicity Minor Black African	645	19	2.9%
Ethnicity Minor Black Caribbean	98	13	13.3%
Ethnicity Minor Chinese	209	0	0.0%
Ethnicity Minor Gypsy Roma	139	12	8.6%
Ethnicity Minor Indian	1842	*	0.2%
Ethnicity Minor Irish	95	5	5.3%
Ethnicity Minor Pakistani	1266	18	1.4%
Ethnicity Minor Traveller of Irish heritage	42	*	2.4%
Ethnicity Minor White and Asian	629	*	0.3%
Ethnicity Minor White and Black African	264	6	2.3%
Ethnicity Minor White and Black Caribbean	415	53	12.8%
Ethnicity Minor White British	17663	445	2.5%

(Note * is used where the number is less than 5 so that individual children cannot be identified)

In terms of actions, our learning told us that a vital first step, if change is going to be meaningful, effective and sustained, is personal reflection and learning. We agreed that initially the work is about hearts and minds - about helping school staff to understand what it's like to be a BAME person in the UK/ Wokingham and examine their own unconscious bias within a society which privileges white people. It is our view that this hearts and minds work is an essential foundation for any other racial equity work in school.

It is an anticipated outcome of this programme of work that exclusion rate disparity will reduce and educational outcomes for some groups will improve in line with their peers.

The LA has received strong support from several HTs for this work. We know that some schools have made use of the RISC racial literacy resources list that we have shared, and the survey shows that many schools are thinking about and engaged in this work – in some cases the LA focus on this will have prompted or strengthened this focus. One school has already appointed a 'racial equity' governor, which perhaps reflects our focus, and use of this term to describe the work.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
N/A

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)
N/A

Public Sector Equality Duty
An equalities assessment will be undertaken during this term as part of the of the Equity in Schools Strategy development.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers
Racial Equity Update: Survey Responses.

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