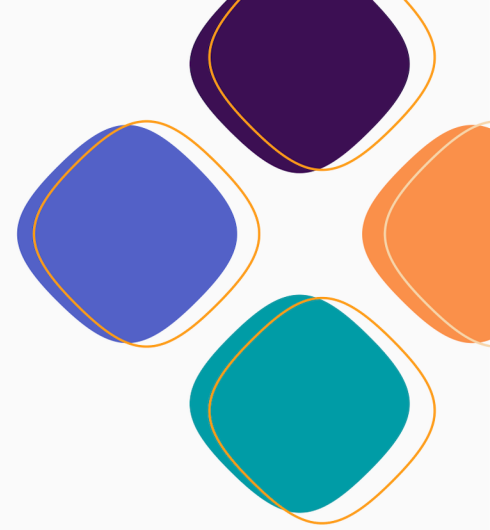


Racial Equity in Education

Showing Racism the Red Card APPG

30th April 2024

Briefing



Citizens UK is the UK's **biggest, most diverse, and most effective people-powered alliance**. We're bringing together **everyday people** and **over 500 local organisations** to build a **better, fairer society**.

Citizens UK builds the power of people and communities to engage in the democratic process. We are strictly non-partisan. We highlight the needs of our communities to those who seek to govern and ask for commitments to work with us.

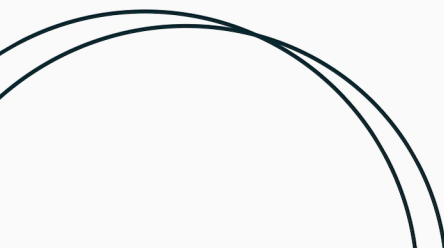
Our community organising method provides a way for people to focus on what unites us, rather than what divides us, listening deeply to the people in our communities, identifying what change we need to make things better and engaging decision makers to make those changes happen.

In this crucial year for our democracy, Citizens UK's eighteen chapters have set out seven key issues we are asking the next UK Government to address, including Racial Equity in Education. The full list of issues is in the [Citizens Agenda](#).

Citizens UK members, including young people, educators and others want to work with the next Government to:

- **Diversify the curriculum**
- **Include racial equity in statutory training, across school staff bodies and in all career phases**
- **Improve recruitment, retention and progression measures for racially marginalised educators**
- **Improve how racist incidents are handled in schools.**

To develop relationships with decision makers in Parliament, our team attended the Showing Racism the Red Card APPG on 30th April 2024



Attendees

Citizens UK

Claire Rodgerson
Heidi Shewell-Cooper
Philippa Sage
Abigail Oyedele
Sarah Lyall
Benjamin Andrews
Shazia Begum
Michaela Ajani

Dixons Academies Trust Bradford

Funmilola Stewart
Vicky Haycock
Maryam Kapree
Ilham Mohamed
Nafisah Miah
Zahrah Sheikh

Every Future Foundation South London

Lara Sengupta
Nazanin Shah Bodaghloo
Lamia Arnold
Delina Tesfay
Iqra Karim

Newcastle University

Professor Heather
Smith

Life Multi-Academy Trust Leicester

Natasha Boyce
Sylvia Cole
Shelemiah Mizah
Mona Sandhu
Amy Ihaza

Nottingham Girls Academy Nottingham

Ruth Gangneux
Doreen Harvey
Joanny Edom
Fareedah Adebessin
Rayan Mohamadene

Stephen Lawrence Research Centre Leicester

Sherilyn Pereira

The Advocacy Academy South London

Chantal Mayo-Holloway
Akhera Williams
Enkuule Mergen
Samaira Mohamed
Vanessa Boodhoo

Our priorities, in the young peoples' words



The text in this briefing was spoken by young people, to APPG members and guests.

Education should be an equaliser, with schools as places where every child has an equal chance to thrive. Sadly this is not yet the case.

In our schools, we're addressing this by making changes to literature and curricula and making sure that racist incidents are being taken more seriously. We're working with teacher training providers, improving diversity in school workforces and have secured commitments from regional mayors to support our work.

We know that so many educational leaders are working hard to create racial equity in their institutions, yet only so much can be done at a local level. We're really inspired by what the Welsh Government are doing - their ambition to create an anti-racist country by 2030 is really wonderful.

We want to work with parliamentarians to make sure that all of the UK can progress along the same lines.

Our vision is for an ambitious, inclusive, anti-racist education system that centres curricula, safeguarding, and workforce development, so that everyone can thrive.



“Experiences of racism and lack of representation have had negative impacts on us, and we want change, not just for us in the present, but for our future generations too”

Joyce, St Thomas More

Diversifying the curriculum

The current curriculum fails to acknowledge the contributions of racially marginalised communities, eroding the self-esteem and academic performance of minority students. Studies show that when students don't see themselves represented in the curriculum, they experience lower achievement and increased stress. It's alarming that only a small fraction of literature and historical texts represent diverse voices.

We need to reform the curriculum to include and celebrate knowledge production within migrant and diaspora communities, as well as from countries outside of Britain, across all subjects.

To enact change, we must implement anti-racist policies and curriculum reforms. We must include the contributions of racially minoritised people within our education system - from history, english, geography and more - why not science, maths and art too?

Collaboration with exam boards and publishers is essential to ensure new curricula are reflected in guidance and assessment materials.

Schools with diverse curricula have been proven to improve academic outcomes and foster a sense of belonging. It's crucial that anti-racism education is integrated into Personal, Social, Health, and Economic (PSHE) curricula.

Together, let's amplify marginalized voices and work towards a future where every student has the opportunity to thrive.

“Did you know that Black students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students? Additionally, Latin and Latinx students have less access to advanced courses and further education, leading to higher dropout rates.

This inequality perpetuates cycles of poverty and social unrest. We must recognize education as a pillar of justice and equity and ensure equal opportunities for all students”

Rayan, Nottingham Girls Academy

Scaffold the new curriculum: training teachers and staff

Changes to the curriculum, behaviour policy and recruitment will only be successful with racially literate school cultures which are sensitive to the experiences of marginalised teachers and students.

Firstly, this involves school staff and teacher training, to ensure racial literacy and competency.

We want students to experience psychological safety in classrooms. The 2020 Runnymede Trust report, Race and Racism in Secondary Schools, outlines that racial literacy training is essential for meeting the needs of all students in a multi-ethnic society.

Our listening shows that in schools where teachers had not received racial literacy training there were concerning issues.

These included:

- Teachers overlooking racist incidents because they failed to recognise the nature of systemic racism
- Teachers not taking racist incidents seriously and as a consequence racism becomes a part of the school culture
- Staff sometimes using inappropriate language
- Anti-immigrant sentiments sometimes being expressed without challenge
- The behaviour system not dealing with racist incidents effectively

We believe statutory training in racial equity and relevant frameworks for school leaders and governors, teachers across career phases and the broader school staff body is essential to addressing issues such as those mentioned and achieving the difference needed.

“We’ve personally seen the impact of racial literacy on our school culture, working closely with the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre. Teachers received expert training and we’ve seen a real shift in our students’ sense of belonging and community”

Shelemiah, Winstanley School, LiFE MAT

Scaffold the new curriculum: recruitment, retention, progression

Recruitment, retention and progression measures must also be addressed, to improve the diversity of the teaching workforce.

Research shows that racially marginalised groups are less likely to receive and accept an offer for Initial Teacher Training compared with their white peers. Additionally, teacher retention is lower for teachers of colour than for their white counterparts.

Overt and covert racial discrimination, disillusionment with their ability to make a difference for pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and a lack of progression opportunities have been explored as reasons for leaving the profession.

In England, there are currently no government targets, programmes or funding to improve ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce, in contrast to Scotland and Wales.

Having teachers from a range of backgrounds and cultures is important to us because it gives students the ability to envision themselves fitting in, specifically within a profession which is defined by its influence over the future generation.

With a diverse workforce and when seeing that someone with shared traits has pursued their interests and found success, students feel more encouraged to do so. Students are given an opportunity to learn of new cultures to prevent ignorance towards backgrounds they are unfamiliar with, which is imperative considering we live in a country known for tolerance. Without proper understanding of different ethnic groups and ways of life, students are more susceptible of being perpetrators or victims of discrimination.

We also note that disparities persist in leadership, as most senior positions are not held by people from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

This can feel like boundaries and divisions are set in stone - while students may see themselves within a diverse staff, they may also feel that there is a limit to their potential or liberty as it is such a rare occurrence for senior roles to be occupied by a diverse group of people.

It could suggest to young people that there are restrictions within their career paths and that they are only permitted to aspire to a certain extent.

Case study:

Dixons Academies Trust

“We hope the actions of our trust will encourage reflection surrounding government action in this area.

The general staff body hasn't always been as diverse as it is today, across Dixons academies. However, our trust leaders have learned from this.

Over the past few years, the trust has been intentional and honest in publishing data surrounding the ethnicity gap and have started to put measures in place to solve this.

A positive action programme for racially minoritised teachers and leaders has been established to ensure they feel a sense of belonging and are not being overlooked in terms of experience and promotion. This is paired with regular and compulsory training for principals and leaders, based on understanding lived experience and directly challenging bias. The diversity in leadership is starting to increase as a result of this and we hope that future students will be able to see themselves represented in positions at all levels.

However, this work has been completely led by Dixons and there has been no proactive work or accountability from the government in England.

This means that it's unlikely that all other schools are taking similar action, meaning other students may leave the education system with a lack of belonging.

We ask the next government to act on this, committing to developing accountability for schools in this area.”

Ilham, Nafisah and Zahrah, Dixons Academies Trust



Scaffold the new curriculum: effectively dealing with racism

According to research by The Guardian in 2021, data from just a fifth of England's multi academy trusts revealed on average there are over 10,000 reports of racism in schools every year.

Schools today have an issue with racial discrimination and should be better equipped structurally to prevent discrimination and protect students from harm.

Safeguarding around race discrimination is often not a regular reflexive practice for teachers and clear guidelines are lacking.

In spaces where there are such measures, we have seen the positive impact that a safe, student first approach to discrimination has had on school cultures.

We would like policy makers to **implement a systematic method of tackling and effectively dealing with racist abuse in schools**. We ask you to commit to:

- Updating existing safeguarding guidance to ensure zero-tolerance of racism in schools
- Strengthening existing anti-bullying measures
- And providing advice to schools on de-escalation of incidents and how to support students, staff, parents and carers who are impacted.

Safeguarding should value marginalised student's voices and create a culture where racism is in decline, due to adequate teacher training, de-escalation and student-led approaches to cohesion between different backgrounds and cultures.

“My class was multi ethnic, most were children of immigrants. During a discussion about migration, a student argued that immigrants are criminals that cause problems for themselves and the state. The teacher didn't challenge the student and allowed the student to expand on a prejudiced view. To hear this made me feel unimportant and powerless as there was no one to intervene. This would not have been possible had an appropriate safeguarding measure been put in place to ensure classroom debates are held in ways that are sensitive to different races and cultural experiences.”

Working together

It is with disappointment that we recognise the significant changes needed to teacher recruitment, retention and training, classification of racism in schools and the national curriculum but we're proud of Citizens UK members, like us, who've come up with solutions to these issues.

Citizens UK members attended the APPG as young people who are willing to use their voices for change. We have listened to 1000s of racially marginalised students, school staff and parents who share the lived experience of being left in the dark when dealing with racism, or only seeing themselves in the curriculum through a deficit lens.

We want to use these insights to work alongside you, other experts in this area and the Welsh and Scottish Governments to implement the changes we've identified.

Citizens UK members would like to develop long-term relationships with decision makers to implement reforms and to allow those with lived experience of the issues to guide their successful implementation.

We therefore have two key questions for parliamentarians:

Will you:

- **Continue to work with us in any future expert curriculum review panel, to restructure the education system for greater racial equity, so that a diverse range of schools, children, young people, parents and civil society institutions can contribute their insights and experiences?**
- **Meet with us before the General Election, to progress this relationship?**

“We must champion representation for all marginalised ethnicities that have made invaluable contributions to British history and modern society.

Change is possible and attainable, when we come together and prioritise listening and empathy towards one another.”

Iqra, Every Future Foundation



Our policy asks

Citizens UK calls on the next UK Government to:

Review and reform the national curriculum to better represent the contributions of racially marginalised people to British society:

- Across subjects, acknowledge and celebrate knowledge production within migrant and diaspora communities, and from countries outside of Britain
- Within Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curricula, include anti-racism
- Work with exam boards and publishers to integrate new curricula into guidance and assessment.

Make schools safe and more equal places:

- Statutory training in racial equity and relevant frameworks for school leaders and governors, teachers across career phases and the broader school staff body.
- Recruitment, retention and progression measures to improve the diversity of the workforce including those that can be scaled up from schools, multi-academy trusts and regions and adopted as national programmes. The Department for Education should engage in targeted recruitment campaigns and publish ethnicity pay gaps in the education sector with action plans to address inequities.
- Update existing safeguarding guidance to ensure zero-tolerance of racism in schools, strengthening existing anti-bullying measures and provide advice to schools on de-escalation of incidents and how to support students, staff, parents and carers who are impacted.

Work with partners to co-design the reforms and their implementation:

- Engage a diverse range of schools, children, young people, parents and civil society institutions in an expert review panel.
- Consult with the Welsh Government on the Anti-Racist Wales Strategy, to adopt relevant recommendations.
- Work with the above parties over the medium to long-term to design, implement and review reforms.

For further information about this work, contact:

Claire.Rodgerson@Citizensuk.org



Registered charity no. 1107264
JACQUARD POINT
1 AND 3 TAPESTRY WAY LONDON
E1 2FJ
020 7043 9881
INFO@CITIZENSUK.ORG
WWW.CITIZENSUK.ORG

