

Toolkit for Schools

Race Equality Charter

As signatories to the Race Equality Charter schools have already made a public statement of their commitment to challenging racism and racial harassment; promoting race equality and cultural diversity and fostering good race relations in their school, this toolkit aims to help schools turn that commitment into action.

The Race Equality Charter Toolkit has been developed by the Bath and North East Somerset Race Equality and Hate Crime Task Force Partnership and provides practical guidance for schools to support them with the effective implementation of the Race Equality Charter.

Each of the 12 Charter Commitments has a corresponding Toolkit section below to help you start thinking about and developing your practice across all the individual areas in the Race Equality Charter.

The Toolkit contains different sections which provide: definitions of key concepts; highlights of important issues; local examples of good practice drawn from schools and other partners across Bath and North East Somerset; practical guidance and examples to inform school policy and practice; and ideas for further reading

Start Using the Toolkit:

- **Create** an inclusive, anti-racist school environment, where everyone feels they belong, and race equality and cultural diversity are actively promoted

An **Inclusive Environment** is one where people feel safe, respected and confident in being who they truly are. In an inclusive community, people share a sense of belonging with each other, value their respective differences and build positive and strong relationships to create a cohesive community.

Being **Anti-Racist** means actively reviewing, recognising and changing existing institutional policies and practices that reproduce and perpetuate racial inequality, challenging individual racist behaviour and attitudes and implementing a whole school approach to policy and practice that promotes race equality, eliminates discrimination, celebrates cultural diversity and fosters good race relations.

The Importance of Belonging

A sense of **Belonging** in school can be defined as *“the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others”*. School belonging accounts for a substantial portion of variance in school motivation, the expectancy of success, and the value students attribute to their learning. For Black and Minority Ethnic students a sense of belonging to the school is an essential element of motivation in their learning.

Local Example - Findings from Research in Bath Secondary Schools

Research carried out with girls from minority ethnic backgrounds in Bath Secondary Schools reported a sense of belonging for children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds comes from a complex web of experiences that are closely tied to their emotional and physical safety. They feel the pressure to fit in and social expectations to a higher degree than their white peers. At times this pressure can lead to unsafe and unhealthy thought patterns (e.g., chemically straightening hair or researching about skin bleaching). This pressure can often be underpinned by harmful experiences they have witnessed or experienced in the school and local community and fear of it happening again. It is important to note that the psychological effect of racism is not reserved for direct lived experiences and what we see and hear on social media and on TV can be just as damaging to a child's psyche and sense of safety. The rise in far-right protests in the recent months for instance, is likely to have impacted this even further.

The research also highlighted that some young people from ethnic minority backgrounds feel that their belonging must be 'earned' and therefore their belonging is conditional to the acceptance they feel within the school community. A lack of conversation and acknowledgment from schools about race related issues routinely came up as a reason for why many young people felt isolated and did not feel that they could ask staff for help. Silence on such topics and impartiality, therefore, were not neutral responses for children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and had direct consequences to how safe and supported they felt at school. Therefore, it is imperative that schools practise and promote an unconditional sense of belonging, where children are accepted for their unique strengths and needs and are recognised and acknowledged for their identities.

Examples of good practice to get you started in creating and sustaining an inclusive school environment where everyone feels they belong:

You have a dedicated individual or group leading on inclusion work rooted in anti-racism. Resources and time are allocated to this role, and the work is recognised within an individual's workload.

Your senior leadership team is literate on matters of race specifically in relation to issues of equality and inclusion. Governors, decision makers and leaders understand the importance of race equality and cultural diversity and champion these through their actions.

You proactively encourage interaction and participation from all sections of your school community, including parents and students, and involve them in a meaningful manner when making decisions.

You celebrate and respect diversity in visible (school website, displays, the curriculum, festivals) and non-visible ways (language, teaching style).

Developing a more inclusive, decolonised curriculum where children and young people can explore the diverse contributions to knowledge from different experiences, perspectives and cultures.

Embedding regular opportunities to reflect, discuss and develop an understanding in children and young people about societal issues whilst actively promoting school values that reflect anti-racist practise.

Creating a sense of belonging by providing opportunities to build long term relationships between B&ME students and staff (especially in secondary schools) through tutor time etc so that young people have safe adults they can approach to discuss issues.

Improving belonging through access to safe places, play and extra-curricular activities, especially for B&ME young people in secondary schools, to have natural opportunities for connection and friendship through shared interests (e.g. access to music and art spaces during lunchtime and participation in after school clubs).

Further Reading

National Education Union, guidance on creating a sense of belonging in schools

<https://neu.org.uk/advice/classroom/behaviour-schools/creating-sense-place-and-belonging-schools>

- **Challenging** all racist incidents, bullying and harassment, taking them seriously and dealing with them effectively in a supportive, meaningful and empowering manner

The Importance of Dealing Effectively with Racist Incidents

Racial harassment and prejudice related bullying can have a negative and wide ranging impact on the mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, behaviour and education of Black and Minority Ethnic children and young people. As a place of education, with a responsibility for safeguarding, schools need to ensure that all incidents of racism, racist bullying and harassment are challenged and dealt with in a meaningful and empowering way, so that unacceptable behaviour is addressed and the adverse impact on your students is eliminated.

Local Research – School Students Experience of Hate Crime and Prejudice Related Bullying

The Bath and North East Somerset Race Equality and Hate Crime Task Force Partnership surveyed 1,700 B&NES secondary school students on their experiences of Hate Crime and Prejudice Related Bullying and published a report in 2020 outlining the impact on young people; the kind of support that worked best; and recommendations for school policy and practice.

Students highlighted the impact that hate crime, discrimination and prejudice related incidents can have on their mental health and education. The research found that these kinds of incidents have a detrimental effect on the social and emotional wellbeing of students, leading to anxiety, depression, loss of confidence, low self esteem, isolation and social withdrawal, and in some cases, had led to suicidal feelings, self harm and the development of eating disorders. Young people also reported the negative impact of their experience on their education, for example feeling unsafe in school, and not wanting or refusing to go to school, lower attendance, having to move school and not being able to concentrate in class or contribute to lessons.

In relation to reporting and support 40% of students did not report the incident or tell anyone about their experience. Their reasons for this included being scared to report; feeling that reporting wouldn't help; having a lack of trust in staff support; and believing that peers would view them negatively. However, 60% of the students who received support described it as good or very good. The most successful support described by young people involved adults actively working to address the situation quickly and directly. Furthermore, good support appeared to be both supportive and non-judgemental and established an effective dialogue between the parties involved.

The report highlighted the actions students felt schools should take to improve their practice in relation to dealing with incidents, these included: Don't ignore incidents; respond quickly; treat incidents seriously; provide specific support to address the impact on young people's mental health; develop a better understanding of how to deal with incidents; use better sanctions and take effective action; give young people effective strategies for dealing with incidents; increase awareness of the impact of hate crime and prejudice based bullying on young people.

The report concluded with recommendations for next steps, these included providing professional development for staff in relation to recognising and responding effectively to prejudice based bullying and understanding its impact, the developing of effective support mechanisms for young people in schools so they can access support both in school and through partner services, promoting a zero tolerance culture in relation to hate crime and prejudice based bullying so that students see it is dealt with effectively and are confident about reporting it. Finally, the report recommended setting up a partnership between schools, the local authority and support services to better identify and respond to what is happening in schools in relation to hate crime and prejudice related bullying and promote good policy and practice to address it effectively together.

Examples of good practice:

The school has a specific policy and procedures which clearly sets out what are racist incidents, bullying and harassment and how you respond appropriately and support students.

Foster a safe and open culture where incidents and concerns can be raised or reported without victimisation or other negative consequences.

Build and increase trust and confidence in your reporting process by communicating and demonstrating a proactive attitude and a willingness to listen and act.

Your policy also aims to support students' wellbeing and education as well as understand what is causing racist behaviour and attitudes.

Ensure all staff when responding to incidents listen to the reporting student, believe them and empathise, rather than immediately questioning or challenging.

Carry out repeated check-ins with all students that have either been victimised or are responsible for the incident.

Provide training for staff to ensure that everyone understands the school policy and are able and confident to carry out its procedures.

You recognise when incidents are indicative of a wider pattern of prejudice or targeting within your setting. If this is the case, a whole school education approach is taken.

Support and safeguard staff from black and minority ethnic backgrounds who have or may have experienced racist incidents from students, colleagues or parents/carers.

The school works closely with the Local Authority, services and organisations who can provide support for students and schools in relation to racist incidents and racism.

You inform and remind all staff that racist incidents must be reported on the schools safeguarding platform.

Report incidents of racist and discriminatory nature to the Local Authority via the SEIRF process and keep an internal record on the number and nature of such incidents as well as of any actions taken to resolve them.

Students are made aware of and can report racist incidents themselves directly through the Local Authority's online RID reporting service.

Further Reading

Scottish Govt guidance on developing procedures to deal with racist incidents

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/addressing-racism-racist-incidents-schools/pages/3/>

- **Ensuring** our recruitment procedures follow the law and guidance on race equality and allow us to employ and develop an ethnically diverse workforce that is representative of the communities we serve

Recent research by the National Foundation for Educational Research (2024) reported “*clear ethnic disparities in the teaching workforce in England at all levels from initial teacher training to headship*”. The research went on to highlight the importance of an ethnically diverse teacher workforce, stating “*A diverse teaching workforce can familiarise pupils...with people from different backgrounds and prepare them for life in an increasingly diverse world...reduce racial prejudice and improve social cohesion*”, and that “*Having role models from diverse cultural backgrounds can be reassuring and inspiring for all pupils and for pupils of colour in particular, showing they belong and encouraging them to work hard and achieve their ambitions*”. The report concluded by suggesting “*schools play their part in improving ethnic diversity amongst teachers and leaders*” and recommended a number of ways to achieve this, most importantly that “*an anti-racist school culture is a key enabler of progression. Therefore, action should focus on ensuring a positive working environment for teachers and leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds*”.

Local Example of Good practice – Primary Headteacher, Bath & North East Somerset

“Ensure your vision to create sense of belonging where all are supported to be their best is a lived experience for your staff team: through noticing and giving feedback on strengths; offering development opportunities that build on strengths (e.g. NPQs, subject leadership roles etc); and having diversity and equality at the core of your vision and values, underpinning all that you do.”

Examples of good practice

Purpose: These practices will help school leadership understand current efforts, identify best practices, and shape future strategies to reduce inequalities in recruitment, employment, retention, and career development.

In relation to Recruitment:

The school regularly carries out diversity audits to identify racial disparities in its workforce and recruitment processes.

Job descriptions and advertisements are written and checked to ensure they are inclusive and free from biased language.

Ensure interview panels are diverse to promote inclusivity and reduce unconscious bias during recruitment.

The school contacts and engages with local and regional community organisations and networks to advertise roles and attract diverse candidates.

Where ethnic disparities exist in the school workforce the school consider using targeted recruitment campaigns to attract candidates from underrepresented groups.

In relation to **Employment:**

Mentorship programmes are established and used to support Black and Minority Ethnic staff.

Regular training is provided on race equality and cultural diversity for all staff.

Employee resource groups exist for Black and Minority Ethnic staff to provide support and networking opportunities.

Review and update school policies to ensure they promote a positive working environment and anti-racist school culture based on inclusivity and equity.

Use anonymous feedback mechanisms for staff to report issues and suggest improvements.

In relation to **Retention and Development:**

Career advice, support and personalised development plans are in place for Black and Minority Ethnic staff.

The school ensures that leadership training programmes are offered to prepare Black and Minority Ethnic staff for advancement.

Implement recognition programmes and rewards that celebrate the achievements of Black and Minority Ethnic staff.

Monitor retention rates, career progression and leadership roles by ethnicity and develop strategies to address any disparities and diversify teaching and leadership teams

Provide Black and Minority Ethnic staff with equitable access to professional development opportunities, workshops, conferences, and courses.

Further Reading

A report by the National Foundation for Educational Research on 'The barriers and promising approaches to support recruitment, retention and progression of people of colour within the teaching workforce'

<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/ethnic-diversity-in-the-teaching-workforce-evidence-review/>

National Education Union research on B&ME teachers experiences in schools and overcoming the barriers to career progression

<https://neu.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/Barriers%20Report.pdf>