



Improving Race Equality in Education

Background

The Welsh Government has made a commitment to publish a Race Equality Action Plan designed to tackle structural racial and ethnic inequalities in Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a). This policy briefing summarises one of six reports produced by the Wales Centre for Public Policy to provide independent evidence to inform the development of the Action Plan. It focuses on evidence and recommendations for action related to race equality in education.

Introduction

The education system privileges and disadvantages particular racial and ethnic minority groups in Wales. This is demonstrated in, for example, attainment gaps across particular racial and ethnic groups, disproportionate rates of exclusion, and experiences of racism among students and staff (e.g. Show Racism the Red Card, 2020a).

To avoid tokenism, it is important that racial equality is a 'golden thread' running through all school policies.

A number of actions have already been taken to tackle race inequality in the Welsh education system, including steps outlined in *Our National Mission* to reduce the attainment gap and

deliver a fairer education system (Welsh Government, 2020b). Most notably, this includes the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales 2022, in consultation with the *Communities, contributions and cynefin: BAME experiences and the new curriculum advisory group* (Welsh Government, 2020c).¹

This policy briefing identifies further actions to tackle racial inequality in education which feature strongly in academic studies and policy reports. They include actions to more effectively embed racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion within ten key areas.

Workforce recruitment

The benefits of a diverse education workforce are well-documented (e.g. Goldhaber, Theobald and Tien, 2015). However, certain ethnic and racial groups remain underrepresented in the teaching profession in Wales relative to the overall population (Education Workforce Council, 2020).

Recommendations

- Dedicate time and resource to diversity and ensure inclusion in recruitment.
- Improve racial literacy within recruitment and communication campaigns that promote teaching (e.g. Discover Teaching).
- Ensure that recruitment and selection panels are diverse and representative.

¹ Actions to review the curriculum and education resources to reflect more diverse histories, cultures, and interests are not included as this is already underway through [Professor Charlotte Williams' curriculum review](#).

- Consider partnership and relationship-based recruitment measures, such as early recruitment or 'grow-your own' initiatives.
- Offer mentoring and social support to all teachers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Include diversity and inclusion measures as success criteria in teacher recruitment, selection, promotion, development, succession planning, and retention.

Workforce training and professional development

In its National Workforce Development Plan (2019-21), the Welsh Government recognises that the education system 'cannot exceed the quality of its teachers' (2019, p.6). In order to meet the needs of pupils from all backgrounds, this means that as well as diversifying the education workforce, professional training must foster racially literate teachers who can deliver culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014).²

Recommendations

- Include awareness and reflection on race-based prejudices and stereotypes in teacher training; and their impact on attitudes, behaviour, and expectations.
- Take an anti-racist approach to training and facilitate effective understanding of whiteness, in a way that supports self-reflection and challenge.
- Support teachers through training in communicating positive and high expectations for Black and Mixed ethnicity pupils in the classroom (who often experience greater disadvantage), and in undertaking pastoral and disciplinary actions.

Include racial equality practices as part of teachers' annual professional development; teachers should attend relevant training and be regularly assessed against anti-racist principles.

- Equip teachers to challenge and de-escalate racist incidents and effectively support pupils targeted by racism and hate crimes through training.

Support programmes for minority ethnic students

Ways of ensuring the effectiveness of support programmes and interventions focusing on educational experiences and outcomes for minority ethnic students, including restorative justice approaches, should be explored and evaluated. Support programmes and restorative justice approaches may be particularly beneficial for Black males, who are disproportionately affected by exclusion from school and are most likely to find themselves in the school-to-prison 'pipeline' (Graham, 2016; Brentnall, 2017).

Recommendations

- Ensure any student support programmes or interventions are outcomes-focused and based on a thorough assessment of the evidence base.
- Take account of mentor characteristics and shared interests in the design and delivery of mentoring programmes. They need to be culturally tailored and seek to engage students' families.
- Consider intersectional factors (e.g. gender, sexual orientation) alongside race when delivering interventions.
- Include adequate mentor training or accreditation in the design and delivery of mentoring programmes.
- Conduct further impact evaluations to investigate the efficacy of programmes

² Culturally responsive (or relevant) teaching refers to 'a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes' (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 382).

and interventions within distinct ethnic minority subgroups, including non-Black boys and minority ethnic girls.

Reducing permanent and temporary exclusions

Reducing temporary and permanent exclusions of Black, Asian and Minority ethnic children and young people from mainstream education settings must be a high priority in Wales, given observed racial disproportionality in exclusions and the associated increased risk with later criminal offending and other negative outcomes (Graham, 2016; Brentnall, 2017).

Gathering real time data on exclusion and ethnic breakdown is essential to monitoring potential patterns of discrimination (Brentnall, 2017), and it is important to disaggregate data by different ethnic subgroups.

Recommendations

- Collect real time data on exclusion that tracks each child, distinguished by ethnic subgroup, to identify and address potential patterns of discrimination.
- Ensure appropriate data sharing takes place with Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Safeguarding Partners, and other stakeholders, to ensure appropriate support.
- Put responsibility on local authorities to work closely with schools to review information and trends, taking action where necessary, and providing alternatives.
- Offer alternatives to children, such as a 'right to return' period, as part of defensible decision-making around exclusions.
- Consider restorative justice approaches as a possible way to manage challenging behaviour and conflict, and to reduce exclusions.

School policies

Compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and specific duties for Wales (PSED) is a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010, and schools must meet these statutory duties. They should have strategic equality plans and policy frameworks that are reflexive (Hancock, 2007; Parken, 2010), and subject to regular evaluation and review. This is essential in fostering school systems, institutions, and environments that promote race equality.

These documents play a significant role in how schools operate and should therefore ensure that race equality is embedded and normalised within them (Alexander, Weekes-Bernard and Arday, 2015; Gillborn, 2008). They should address the experiences of ethnic minority staff, as well as students. To avoid tokenism, it is important that racial equality is a 'golden thread' running through all school policies, and that these documents truly reflect local need.

Recommendations

- Ensure race equality is a golden thread running through all school policies so that it becomes 'mainstream', as well as developing and implementing a specific racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion policy.
- Conduct regular reviews of all school policies and strategies to ensure alignment with the objective of race equality and to ensure effective implementation.
- Involve students and parents/carers in co-creating, reviewing, and implementing diversity and inclusion policies.
- Ensure that robust systems are in place within schools for managing racist incidents and that these are accessible and communicated to parents and carers.
- Commission a Welsh Government review of complaints processes in schools, with a particular focus on managing racist

incidents and preventing or addressing hate crime.

- Consider restorative justice approaches when seeking resolution and/or repair for racist incidents and hate crimes, with school policies and processes centring the experience and welfare of the victim or target.
- Ensure that schools have the necessary guidance and resources to support them to develop and implement effective diversity and inclusion policies.

School inspection regimes

School inspection regimes, frameworks, and practices are an important way of holding schools to account for reaching required standards, including in relation to tackling race inequalities. Targeted and relevant training of school inspectors (Brentnall, 2020), and evaluation of current and future frameworks, can both be used to improve how school inspection regimes address inequalities. Estyn's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 includes an objective to evaluate equality and diversity issues during inspections (Estyn, 2020), and Estyn (2017) have released guidance on how and what to evaluate. This could provide a measure of accountability and advice for schools to comply with legal duties and advance racial equality. It will, however, be important for this to be seen as a mainstream part of the inspection process, rather than as an additional or optional element (Osler and Morrison, 2002).

Recommendations

- Assess racial diversity and inclusion as a priority alongside academic attainment within school inspection frameworks, for example by successfully implementing the Estyn Strategic Equality Plan, 2020-2024.
- Distinguish between the experience and outcomes of ethnic minority subgroups within these inspections, as well as

- between racial and ethnic minority students and White British students.
- Aim to identify and communicate good practice in school inspections in a way that facilitates and supports its uptake more broadly.

Data collection, monitoring and reporting

The need for education-related race equality strategies to be targeted and data-driven has been frequently articulated in review recommendations (e.g. Brentnall, 2017), strategy (e.g. Department for Education [DfE], 2018a; Welsh Government, 2019), and the wider literature (e.g. Carter Andrews et al., 2018).

In addition to more stringent categorisation of ethnicity data related to education-related variables ('what'), there is also a need for regular monitoring ('when') of data (DfE, 2018b), using a range of qualitative and quantitative methods ('how') to support meaningful evaluation (Parken et al., 2019; Welsh Government, 2019).

Recommendations

- Review ethnicity data collection in education to help to identify any key gaps – such as racist incidents – and priorities for future data collection and reporting.
- Allow for disaggregation by particular ethnic minority identities in data collection, as well as by other protected characteristics, to allow for intersectional analysis.
- Use a range of qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data, to support meaningful evaluation.

Further and higher education

People from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to attend university

than people from White backgrounds, but people from White backgrounds are more likely to attend high-tariff universities and are more likely to receive first-class degrees than all other ethnic groups (Centre for Social Justice, 2020). The reason for this disparity remains unexplained, although teaching and assessment practices may play a role (Centre for Social Justice, 2020).

There is also evidence of widespread racial harassment towards racial and ethnic minority staff and students across UK universities, with recent evidence also suggesting that university staff lack confidence in challenging such incidents (EHRC, 2019; Universities UK, 2020).

Recommendations

- Pursue racial equality in all areas of university life, including access, retention, progress, achievement and student and staff experience, rather than being limited to access to higher education institutions.
- Consider data in accordance with ethnic subgroups and other relevant intersectional variables.
- Work to address possible factors limiting the achievement of Black, Asian and minority ethnic students, including teaching and learning practice and racial harassment.

Early years

Early years education provision continues to be a work-in-progress with regards to access and outcomes for Black, Asian and minority ethnic children and families, and Black pupils in particular, who show lower attainment than White British pupils during early years education (EHRC, 2018). There is, however, very limited evidence as to the causes of this disparity or how they may be addressed.

Recommendations

- Commission Welsh Government research and invest in anti-racist training for early years practitioners.
- Encourage early years providers to share best practice regarding tackling race inequalities in the sector.
- Support Black, Asian and minority ethnic early years teachers to progress within the profession.

National education policy

In order to create A More Equal Wales, mainstreaming an equalities perspective into all policy making is essential (Parken, 2018). The Welsh Government has already taken strides in this direction, particularly with regards to gender, but there is further scope for embedding anti-racism within education policy (Show Racism the Red Card, 2020b).

Policies that fail to examine unacknowledged assumptions embedded in policy frameworks can reinforce social and economic divisions (Parken et al., 2019). A reflexive process that involves policy makers, academics, equality organisations and 'experts by experience' (as the Welsh Government is doing through its Race Equality Action Plan Steering Group) will help to address this and support the mainstreaming of equality in policy and practice (Parken et al., 2019).

Recommendations

- Policy makers to work reflexively and collaboratively with academic experts, equality organisations, and 'experts by lived experience'.
- Allow data collection that informs policy making to interrogate intersectional barriers and distinctions between ethnic subgroups.

- Education policy makers to work collaboratively with policy makers in other intersecting and priority areas (e.g. criminal justice, housing, health and social care) to develop accessible, inclusive, financially sustainable, inclusive, and adaptable policies.
- Identify markers of success that can be evaluated during implementation through ongoing review.
- Include both qualitative and quantitative measures in policy evaluation.

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Find out more

For the full report see Arday, J. (2020). **Improving Race Equality in Education.** Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy.



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