



**Ethnic Minorities  
& Youth Support  
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**Tîm Cymorth  
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## Racism & 'Race' in Schools: Experiences & Practices in Wales

A Collaborative Paper by Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team Wales, Show Racism the Red Card, Race Council Cymru, TGP Cymru.

*The voices of BAME Young people foregrounded within this document express loud and clear that for a significant proportion of the growing number of BAME pupils in Wales, the experience of racism is an everyday almost normalised one with lasting and damaging impact. These voices also bring into sharp focus the critical role of schools and teachers in how they respond to racism, with this response found to be severely lacking on the whole, compounded by a lack of BAME teachers, particularly at senior levels in Wales. Also illuminated is the way in which a 'white-washed' curriculum distorts both the BAME pupils' sense of self-worth as well as their own and their white peers' understanding of their place and value in the world.*

# Executive Summary

Ethnic minority pupils in Wales account for more than 10% of children in Wales' schools and 32% of children in Cardiff schools. At the same time as ethnic diversity is increasing in Wales and the UK, there is an "overriding view" that race and race-related issues are at the margins of the current political agenda. This paper seeks to illuminate how issues of race and ethnicity are affecting ethnic minority children in Wales, particularly within the schools setting.

Based on both academic research and personal testimonies, the paper presents the ways in which young people encounter racism in schools. It highlights both overt forms of racism, such as hate crime and bullying, but also more covert ways, such as bias in disciplining BAME students (particularly males) and institutional discrimination. It concludes with a consideration of diversity in curriculum, both for the transformative effect it can have on tackling racism, but also the way in which a white-centred Eurocentric syllabus can disadvantage and further push BAME experiences from the mainstream.

Whereas pupils in Wales are becoming a more ethnically diverse group, teachers in Wales are not. BAME teachers account for less than 3% of teachers. In 2015/16, only 25 people of colour embarked upon Initial Teacher Training in Wales – 2% of the cohort. This figure has been declining since 2010 and there is some evidence that aspiring BAME teachers avoid or leave the profession due to racism in schools.

Thirty years ago, the Swann report, "Education for All," called for equity in education and referred to a need for curriculums that reflect the ethnic diversity of students. It noted classroom bias against particular ethnic minority groups and called for all teachers to be trained in teaching to ethnically diverse classrooms. Many current researchers lament that, 30 years on from the Swann report, we are still making those same demands.

In this paper, we focus on issues of racism in schools, educational attainment and diversity in the curriculum. We underline the argument for:

- Specific requirements for regular anti-racist education throughout key stages and robust monitoring of racist bullying and incidents in schools;
- An authentically diverse curriculum that involves engagement with pupils and community in its creation and is embedded across the curriculum. The ongoing redevelopment of Wales curriculum after the Donaldson review presents an excellent opportunity;
- Teachers being trained in a) cultural competence, the skills to reflect on their own identity and privilege and how that may affect pupils; b) to recognise and respond effectively to racism and c) to develop authentic diversity in curriculums;
- Increasing the representation of BAME teachers and employees at all levels of the education system.

In 2016, the charity Show Racism the Red Card conducted surveys with trainee teachers and teachers in Wales. One-third felt that they weren't equipped to recognise racism in the classroom and two-thirds did not feel confident supporting a victim through a racist incident. Delegates at a March 2014 Conference, "Raising Aspirations: Ethnic Minority Achievement in

Wales,” expressed the view that coverage of diversity, equality and ethnic minority achievement in Initial Teacher Training was tokenistic and superficial with new teachers having only a “cosmetic” understanding of race, diversity and equality issues (Brentnall 2017:4). What this shows, is that while Black and Minority Ethnic pupils constitute a significant and growing proportion of the Welsh population, there has been little evidence that their needs, as defined by either the Wellbeing Act or the Donaldson Curriculum Review, are currently being met.

During 2017, EYST Wales undertook a series of engagements with young school pupils from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds about their experiences of racism, education, and diversity in the curriculum. Key messages from this included:

In terms of experiences of racism:

- Some of those consulted perceived that teachers treat them more harshly than their White peers.
- Most of the pupils had experienced or witnessed a racist incident.
- For some pupils, racist incidents and bullying are an everyday experience: “Anything could be turned into a racist comment about you ... It makes you feel very alone.”

In terms of school responses to racism:

- Many students lacked faith that teachers or staff in schools would respond appropriately to a racist incident and did not report “because they [the school staff] wouldn’t understand.”
- A few students feared discipline if they reported a racist incident and some were told to stay away from the perpetrator, leading to a feeling they weren’t allowed to “roam free in school.”
- Only one had experienced restorative justice after a racist incident, though nearly all thought that would be the best response.
- A few pupils had experienced little or no racism. One student who had never experienced or witnessed a racist incident in school referred to the fact that he attended a “rights respecting” school with an ethnically diverse student population.

Regarding the school curriculum:

- Most felt that diversity in the curriculum is very important for their own self-esteem and also to help other students understand their experiences and values: “I want us to be represented in our culture and religion; you need to know where we came from.”
- Most students felt their identities and histories were not reflected in the curriculum and some felt when they were, it was in a negative way: “White people made Black people slaves – That’s what we learned [about Black history].”
- One group expressed the importance of embedding and representing ethnic diversity throughout the curriculum. This group of girls noted a lack of BAME role models in science subjects and one went on to say, “In every subject, we want to hear a fact about Muslim people achieving big stuff – not just Muslims but different races – so instead of [being allotted to history or RE], in Maths, in the odd lesson, we learn about past people past who discovered different things.”

The voices of BAME Young people foregrounded within this document express loud and clear that for a significant proportion of the growing number of BAME pupils in Wales, the experience of racism is an everyday almost normalised one with lasting and damaging impact. These voices also bring into sharp focus the critical role of schools and teachers in how they respond to racism, with this response found to be severely lacking on the whole, compounded by a lack of BAME teachers, particularly at senior levels in Wales. Also illuminated is the way in which a 'white-washed' curriculum distorts both the BAME pupils' sense of self-worth as well as their own and their white peers' understanding of their place and value in the world.

To respond to these issues, we therefore make the following recommendations of Welsh Government and other public sector policy-makers in Wales:

1. Prevent and challenge racist attitudes by embedding in the new curriculum specific requirements for regular anti-racist education throughout key stages and monitor this via the schools inspection framework (ESTYN).
2. Improve the monitoring and reporting of racist incidents and bullying in schools by making this a mandatory requirement, as recommended by Children's Commissioner and EHRC Wales.
3. Address the lack of BAME teachers, particularly at senior level by promoting the recruitment, retention and progression of BAME educators as well as BAME policy makers within the Education Sector.
4. Develop an authentically diverse curriculum that involves engagement with pupils and community in its creation and is embedded across the curriculum. The ongoing redevelopment of Wales' curriculum after the Donaldson Review presents a unique opportunity to action these changes.
5. Include BAME people and students in the current re-design of the curriculum and set specific targets for representation of non-White histories and cultures;
6. Work with the Education Workforce Council and other providers of teacher training and CPD to ensure that teachers are trained in a) cultural competence, the skills to reflect on their own identity and privilege and how that may affect pupils; b) to recognise and respond effectively to racism and c) to development authentic diversity in curriculums;
7. Introduce concerted and systematic programmes to raise the attainment of Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, and Black and Mixed Ethnicity groups that have historically suffered the lowest attainment, along with the continuation of programmes targeted at BAME groups more widely.
8. Ensure rigorous monitoring of the benefits of the support for ethnic minority and GRT pupils and monitor how transfer of previous targeted funding to general education funds affects pupil engagement and performance.
9. Find examples of best practices in how schools respond to racist incidents and teach pupils about race in Wales and replicate them.

For a copy of the full report see [www.eyst.org.uk](http://www.eyst.org.uk) or email [ginger@eyst.org.uk](mailto:ginger@eyst.org.uk)

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