



Twyford
C of E
Academies Trust

Dear Jemima and former students ,

Thank-you for your letter and the challenge which you set before us as a school. The brutal murder of George Floyd shocked us all and the staff and Governors of Twyford school would certainly wish to confirm our continued commitment to tackling racism in all its forms. Our immediate action as a school was to affirm this to our own students. We therefore put out an assembly (albeit a remote one) for all students and parents making this commitment clear. It invited students to reflect on the absolute unacceptability of racism and the need for all members of our community to feel a sense of agency in combatting all forms of racism through positive action.

Undoubtedly, the issue of structural racism is a real one for schools also and this is something which has been a continued focus for some years at Twyford. As you rightly say in your email, Twyford is an urban school and it has a rich mix of cultures and ethnicities. Over the past 20 years (to my certain knowledge) issues of equality and disadvantage have been scrutinised very earnestly and systemic steps have been taken which have had measurable impact. However, there is always more that we can do. Staff at all levels of the school are highly motivated by this imperative. We have already embarked on a review process and will take a proposal in relation to this to our school Governing Bodies in the next fortnight. This will involve detailed scrutiny of the academic and pastoral curriculum as well as consideration of key institutional practices relating to recruitment and behaviour policies and staff training. Initial responses from staff do indicate that there is lobbying which can be done on the diversity of texts / coverage within specific exam syllabuses. I can assure you that this will have my full support.

What follows is an early appraisal of the current situation in relation to the curriculum as this is the main thrust of your petition and request.

Over the past 7 years the curriculum in all subjects at Twyford has been entirely overhauled. This has been at KS3 as well as at KS4 and 5 in line with the new GCSEs and A-Levels. It has been a very thorough process which has looked at both skills and content coverage. Teaching teams have given careful consideration to the units chosen from within exam board syllabuses and the topics covered in yrs. 7 – 9 to lead towards these. Heads of Department have been able to give a wide range of examples of how this process has already taken into account issues of diversity in general and Imperialism in particular. In History GCSE, for example two units are now covered which forefront issues of colonisation: *'Migration, empires and the people: c790 to the present day'* and *'America 1840 – 1895: Expansion and consolidation'*. In Geography GCSE students now study a 'Global Development' Unit which looks at the causes of inequality, one of which is the impact colonisation has had on differences in development. The case study looked at in depth is the city of Mumbai. In both these subjects units are also studied in the lower school which build

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students' understanding (and also ensure a strong basic understanding - even if a particular humanities subject is not taken in the upper school). In Yr 8 History for example, where students previously only studied the Tudors and Stuarts they now spend a term addressing the British Empire (including involvement in the slave trade, the Sepoy rebellion, the Boer War, Imperial Propaganda and more). This also includes opportunity for students to consider the legacy of these events and developments into the present day. Having observed these lessons in action, I am clear that students are given direct access to source material and the opportunity for informed and intelligent debate over the economic and cultural motivations of colonisation. Our history teaching teams agree that British colonialism must be presented in an unvarnished manner. There is no attempt to deny the past, simply to learn about it and from it. In Geography, in the same year students now study a unit on Africa including the impact of colonisation on development in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are encouraged to see Africa as a continent of variety and resource rather than dependency is an important part of the curriculum intent. Students also look at issues of and inequality within Lagos to show different perspectives of a teenager living in slums compared to one growing up in a wealthy part of the city. I hope that this work better equips students to understand their own society and their place within it as well as underlying issues and the legacy they inherit. A-Level History and Geography both offer studies in greater depth. Having looked at the story of empire in both KS3 and 4, the A-level history course picks up on totalitarianism, communism and extreme right wing philosophies within studies of Nazi Germany and Russia in the 20th Century. I'd suggest that these are vital topics for the consideration of equality and inclusion. In A-Level Geography– a Changing Places unit introduces ideas from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's concept of the 'danger of a single story – exploring how places are experienced differently by different individuals with different background and perspective – examples range from Alcatraz, Puerto, Uluru and District 6 in Cape Town finishing with a major Place Study on Ealing Broadway (to draw on students' own lived experiences) there are also studies on 'Global Systems and Global Governance' – contrasting the different of experiences of globalisation between developed and developing countries. Here the case study chosen has been sugar, in order to open up consideration of the impact of global trade (and the legacy of colonialism) on St Kitts and Nevis and Barbados.

Examples from A-level humanities are even wider ranging. For brevity, I have given headlines only:

Subject	Relevant coverage of Colonialism/Nationalism/Racial Equality
Politics	<p>UK Government/Politics (<i>Topics include coverage of</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Human Rights Act (inc the protection of the rights of minorities) • The European Union: (inc the 2016 refugee crisis) • The Windrush Scandal and The Iraq War • Diversity within parliament and judiciary: (inc issues of religious and racial representation) • Judicial Review case-study: R V. Jogee and the interpretation of 'joint enterprise murder' • Pressure groups and the impact on equality and Debates conceding the impact of ethnicity on voting behaviour <p>US Gov't Politics(<i>Some overlapping issues with UK but also: include coverage of</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideological changes in Democratic and Republican parties (attitudes to policies such as affirmative action)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political pluralism in the US: Underrepresentation of black Americans under-represented in politics. What are the reasons for this? • Civil Rights: constitution/bill of rights /14th Amendment/ ending segregation and The impact of salient political issues concerning civil rights and liberties on US politics in relation to race also Supreme Court interpretation of Travel Ban (commonly known as the Muslim Ban) • Presidency: case-study on significance of Barak Obama as 1st African American President • Judiciary: Case-study: the Travel Ban from Donald Trump – used as an example of Supreme Court interpretation that they upheld the Travel Ban (commonly known as the Muslim Ban) <p>Ideologies (<i>a number of relevant issues including coverage of</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationalism: Post-Colonial Nationalism: inc anti-imperial campaigns in Africa and Asia and their use of nationalism in this as well as their creation of identities e.g. Julius Nyerere in Tanzania and his policy of Ujamma also Marcus Garvey and Pan-Africanism (root cause for the ideology, controversies related to it and its impact into the modern day inc influence on Malcom X and the Nation of Islam, West Indian Rastafarianism in the 1950s and Ethiopia • Globalism and multiculturalism: inc impact on migration and debate on multiculturalism and cultural assimilation of migrant groups.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racialist nationalism and nativism: Charles Maurres/Nazism and the role of nationalism in racist regimes (eg 1930s) and in justifying imperialism – whilst this does not offer perspectives from modern diverse groups it is important in student’s understanding of issues that affect minority groups around the world) • Liberalism: The attitude of John Locke to slavery • Conservatism: The attitude of Thomas Hobbes to race
Sociology:	<p>Major units on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Crime and Deviance • Work, Poverty and Welfare <p>Each of these cover issues of institutional racism in detail</p> <p>Also unit on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Development (focus on Colonialism and neo-colonial exploitation)
Psychology:	<p>Units on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ ‘Issues and Debates’ (Addresses issues of Cultural and Gender Bias including norming of behaviours by dominant groups. Also impact of dominant white male perspective on the understanding of human psychology □ Schizophrenia (addresses racial bias in patterns of diagnosis and underlying causes for this)
Science:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KS 3 units reference the contribution of Arabic cultures to early scientific research □ KS4 unit’s forefront BAME scientists. • Targeted work is undertaken with BAME students to raise aspirations in relation to ‘high prestige’ science pathways - e.g. trips/visits/clubs • Med-soc speaker programme has ensured cultural diversity in speaker programme

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RE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yr. 7 focus on Hinduism/Buddhism and Sikhism designed to broaden cultural understanding • Yr. 8 -10 includes units challenging assumptions on Crime and punishment/Peace and conflict and Families and relationships (including prejudice and acceptance)
MFL:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KS3 – Specific units which promote the positive aspects of diversity, such as la culture francophone and el mundo hispanohablante; Extra-curricular clubs supporting this idea, from the range of films shown in film club to special events for different festivals throughout the Yr. • KS4 – Of the 3 GCSE themes, for all languages Theme 1 is “Identity and culture” and Theme 2 is “Local, national and international areas of interest”, hence why so much of our course promotes cultural understanding and recognition of the diversity across the French, Spanish and German-speaking worlds • KS5 – specific units of A level course covering immigration, integration and racism (German); contemporary francophone music, the positive aspects of a diverse society, life for marginalised people and francophone culture (French); Spanish: regional identity in Spain, racism and immigration; the A level French set film “La Haine” was also groundbreaking in its unapologetic exploration of racism in France.

Finally, some reflections from subject leads in English and the Creative Arts where there has also been a significant effort to be culturally inclusive even where prescribed texts/set works/named artists come from a more homogenous background

Music: In Yr 7 students study the music of South Africa and the Caribbean (including Gospel, Reggae and protest song). In Yr 8 the curriculum is devoted to the history of pop music, beginning with the abolition of slavery and linking the development of Blues, Jazz, and Rock, n, roll and Pop music to the history of civil rights. From Yr 9 new Music Tech and Music in performance curriculum pathways have been chosen to balance the narrow/conservative range of music covered in the conventional GCSE syllabus. In Yr 10, every lesson in the newest of these courses will start with a listening activity evaluating a different live performance (on platforms like NPR Tiny Desk Concerts) by a contemporary artist. As a course focused on contemporary popular music, the vast majority of the focus artists will be BAME artists, including Lianne La Havas, Thundercat, H.E.R, Anderson Paak, Daniel Caesar, Leon Bridges, Sampha, and Laura Mvula. Students will also be performing songs by BAME artists from the mid-20th century to today, and since the course is ultimately studentled, they will have the choice to choose their own repertoire as individuals and in small ensemble groups.

Drama: Diverse practitioners and playwrights are now included in the syllabuses at KS4 and 5 (e.g. Frantic assembly and plays by the black playwright Roy Williams which forefront issues of race). Choices of performance are also carefully selected to ensure these include black actors (e.g. John Boyega as Woyzeck in the study of this set text).

Art: Currently Yr 10 to Yr 13 Art, Graphics and Photography students study independent artists and graphic designers who are from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Students are encouraged to look at personal projects drawing from their personal backgrounds and expressing diverse views on race, gender and the society we live in.

English: KS4 and 5 set works and authors do come from a limited range identified within the syllabus. However, where possible choices are made to reflect a greater cultural diversity (e.g. Hoseini ‘A Thousand Splendid Suns’) and a balance is also achieved via school produced wider reading lists at every key stage. A 16+ National Literacy Trust

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online 16+ book club ('Behind the Cover') has recently been set up to complement these was recently promoted to all Yr 11 leavers and all Yr 12 students. Current reader is 'Girl, Woman, Other', by Bernardine Evaristo.

I am grateful to Ms Ingham, Ms Hobhouse, Ms Adams and Ms Ighorae, Messrs Orringe, Hird and Ahira, Mr Smith, Ms O'Brien, Ms Gilbert, Ms Glossop, Mr Roberts, Ms Easton, Ms Townsend, Mr Fry and Ms Serhal for undertaking this review, for their work in developing the curriculum to confront issues and celebrate diversity as required. In every case, subject leads have been keen to reflect with their teams on what further improvements can be made and we are delighted to receive further pointers from former students in the light of the summary above.

In conclusion there are two further areas which I think make a difference to confronting issues of structural racism within school.

Firstly, we have devised what we refer to as the pastoral curriculum. This is taught in tutor times and also includes assemblies and workshops where issues can be covered in greater detail. The SLT assemblies follow a common formula and twin a modern exemplar/role model with a bible text and theme. We have gone to some pains to ensure that our exemplars are diverse and reflect the full range of our community. This includes inviting parents annually to provide names of individuals or situations whose positive stories we can use. This has helped significantly in widening the 'good stories' we can tell rather than unintentionally returning to themes of slavery and oppression in relation to the black voices which are given air-time. A sample from the year prior to lock-down have included: Philip Emeagwali (Nigerian computer programmer), Waris Dirie (Somali FGM campaigner), Walter Tull (BAME WW1 Army officer and Spurs Footballer) and Shigeru Ban (innovative Japanese architect) which will give you an idea of the range. Overall the pastoral curriculum has a super-strong focus on making positive progression along a well-chosen route. We regularly get students to think about their strengths and opportunities and how they can have agency to address their fallibilities. I am sure that this programme and the engagement of all students and staff with it has helped us address pockets of low-aspiration within the school and ensure that are no covert messages of exclusion from the success culture which is promoted whole school. The use of student leaders and examples of student successes from higher years have also helped with positive re-enforcement and have been a more engaging way of eroding negative stereotypes. Over time, we have also found a greater range of ways of engaging with our parent body so that home/school contact is more often over positive/aspirational issues than negatives. Positive work experience placements are also now pooled more effectively so that students can better share in common aspirations and the Governing Body at Twyford now has a high representation of people of colour – including BAME men which is a considerable support in ensuring strong scrutiny from within the institution and the opportunity for a healthy level of challenge and accountability when required.

Secondly (and finally), we have created a culture of complete transparency in relation to school outcomes are regularly review these in the light of our equality and diversity objectives and review and update the action plan on our website. This is a legal requirement that many academies were slow to comply with. We have also adopted an Equality Policy and regularly assess all policies – including the Curriculum Policy – for equality/diversity impact. Also, board papers routinely include an assessment of E&D impact. Most obviously this applies to the achievements of different ethnic groups within final exams (where outcomes for BAME students are well above the national average), but is also taken seriously within quarterly assessment and the review of conduct data, the numbers of cohorts of students taking part in

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extracurricular activities etc. . Any emerging pattern is noted by Heads of Department or Heads of Year, possible causes are identified and where possible solutions found. This is not necessarily an issue of 'catch-up classes'. The culture of transparency has enabled us to become better at picking up issues such as lower literacy or undiagnosed SEN with individuals or groups before the issue has translated into underachievement/disengagement. Improvements in teaching and learning techniques have also helped – as Mr Harley has pointed out in his curriculum review in Maths, even in a subject, where content might be assumed to be bias free, the cultural assumptions in how questions are framed or classrooms managed, may make all the difference to failure or success for students. In short the slow, steady breaking down of stereotypical assumptions.

I recognise that this letter may be longer than the signatories of the petition had anticipated, however the issue raised is a very important one and staff have therefor given considered responses which I have done my best to synthesise. We believe that the issue of challenging racism is something which schools can and should take on and all the schools within the Twyford CofE Academies Trust are fully committed to this. We are proud of the steps we have already taken and have identified initial thoughts about others. This response (and the more detailed subject proposals for further change) has been discussed with the student subcommittee at Twyford and a further plan will go to the full Governing Body so that we can ensure that the additional steps which Heads of Department and Senior staff propose are taken forward over the next academic year.

With regard to lobbying, a number of Heads of Department have suggested taking up the issue of lack of diversity in set texts/artists/composers/research case studies with the exam boards and I wholeheartedly endorse this and will support them in taking this forward. It will be more effective than lobbying the DfE I think, particularly in the current context. We also see it as a priority to ensure that all staff are fully trained in understanding & addressing issues of unconscious bias and systemic racism in general as well as specific support in managing cultural differences in pastoral contexts.

Please feel free to come back to me on any of the above and I will arrange a meeting to discuss further

Very best wishes to you all from me, Ms Barrie and all of the Twyford staff.



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