



BOHUNT EDUCATION TRUST – STATEMENT ON BLACK LIVES MATTER

Our aim at Bohunt Education Trust (BET) schools is to be inclusive, kind and welcoming. We pride ourselves on our high expectations for all and refusing to accept an impoverished past as justification for an impoverished future. We are resolutely committed to the promotion of equality and the creation of learning communities free from intolerance, discrimination and unconscious bias. We are clear that ethnicity is a protected characteristic and we stand in solidarity with the Black community in the struggle against racism and in tackling matters of inequality.

Over the last month, a number of BET's current students and alumni have either contacted school leaders directly, or signed an open letter in response to the death of George Floyd and the response from the Black Lives Matter movement, asking how we and our schools can play a positive role in the future.

We are delighted to receive such communication as a key part of vision is to create students who are not only successful in life but want to change things for the better as they navigate it – be they social, environmental or political. We have welcomed the correspondence, which has been thoughtful and constructive, and is testament to our students and alumni trying to do exactly this: to change things for the better, to become game-changers.

As a high-achieving, ambitious and innovative group of schools, we are acutely conscious of our position of influence. As a pioneering education trust, we encourage our students and staff to be the difference they want to see in the world. We recognise that these issues are not new, and that they are pervasive. We know that challenging racism must be part of our responsibility to broader society and should include ongoing reflection and improvements by individuals and organisations - and we are committed to playing our part.

The majority of the requests we received focused on curriculum reform or diversification and we have responded individually to a number of students and sought their views on what, specifically, they would have wanted to know to make a difference to society. We will share these views with Subject Directors, so that they can cross-reference it against curriculum maps (which run across all our schools).

As a multi-academy trust, it is necessary for us to largely follow the National Curriculum (NC) - which is how state schools are inspected - and so real reform will come from the Government. Currently, the NC and exam specifications do not support the Black Lives Matter movement well; for example – BAME writers have been dropped from the new AQA exam specification and the History NC is prescriptive and content-heavy.

However, we rightly ensure that our curriculum matches what we feel is important. Below are a few examples of what we currently teach, much of which will be familiar to alumni:

- The English Key Stage 4 curriculum includes other cultures (e.g. American Literature Of Mice and Men - although a white author) and includes BAME writers, for example,

John Agard from British Guyana and the poem 'Checkin' out me history' is very much about attitudes to other cultures and a poem by Imtiaz Dharker is about refugees and conflict - both Imtiaz and Agard live in the UK.

- Within geography, the legacy of colonialism and slavery is within the Year 8 scheme of work (this means it is before students choose their options and so will be studied by **all** students) on factors that impact on development and at Year 12 it is part of a variety of units: impact on Glasgow, portrayal of BAME in art in the past and how that fuels current prejudices and perceptions and access to national parks for BAME people.
- In history, colonialism and slavery are also taught in Year 8 (so again studied by **all** students), as is the Civil Rights Movements in the USA and the UK. More specifically, those units cover Britain's role in slavery plus Thomas Clarkson and Olaudah Equiano's campaigns, Benjamin Zephaniah's rejection of an OBE, imperial India, a series of lessons on the Benin Bronzes, the scramble for Africa, and an analysis of Britain's conduct as an imperial power in Africa, lessons on race in Britain, including Windrush, and a lesson on whether race is adequately represented in the British curriculum. The subject also participates in Black History Week.
- Racism specifically is covered in our PSHE curriculum and is revisited in different year groups.

We have sought and collected views from our alumni about what they would have liked to have been taught. Based on their comments, we are:

- Introducing more BAME writers into the English curriculum
- Reviewing the History curriculum and asking ourselves particularly, 'Whose history are we representing?' It is likely this will lead to a wider variety of sources and different case studies within the slavery, empire and civil rights units
- Reviewing the Geography (and wider) curriculum to consider post-colonial geography.
- Running a diversity day (gender, disability and race) across a number of our schools
- Reviewing our data to look for unconscious bias.

The events of the last few weeks serve as a powerful reminder of the need for action by us all. Racism has never been, is not and never will be tolerated in any of our schools. We recognise that our schools are geographically situated in predominantly white demographic areas, we are not complacent about our responsibility to ensure that students and staff understand the importance of promoting race equality. Indeed, this makes the issue more important not less.

We have, since the start of COVID-19 lockdown, been 'ahead of the curve' in providing support for socially disadvantaged families, lending devices to students who cannot access online learning; setting up food banks and ensuring that vulnerable children can come to school even during the holidays.

Our Equality Objectives aims for the next four years are clear. Namely to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Relating to these aims, our objectives can also be found in our Equalities Objectives statement with detailed plans setting out how they will be achieved. They are to:

- *ensure our staff and volunteers represent the diversity of the communities across our member schools.*
- *ensure all students regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and background (including personal circumstances) have equitable access to the same total experience and opportunity of our Schools' curriculum including all extra- and co-curricular activities, trips and events including ensuring equitable access to appropriate careers/post 16 pathways:*
- *reduce the incidence of the use of racial or homophobic language by students in member schools.*

We will strive to do more within our schools to challenge systemic racism by listening more, deepening our commitment to recognising personal implicit and explicit biases; talking about, confronting, and responding to racism, and supporting our students and staff to be anti-racists.

*"Race and racism are a reality that so many of us grow up learning to just deal with. But if we ever hope to move past it, it can't just be on people of colour to deal with it. **It's up to all of us – Black, white, everyone – no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out.** It starts with self-examination and listening to those whose lives are different from our own. It ends with justice, compassion, and empathy that manifests in our lives and on our streets."*

Michelle Obama, in a statement following the death of George Floyd

Finally, we are incredibly proud of our current and past students, who have grown to be successful and caring members of society. Indeed, we are and always have been committed to ensuring our students are not only aware of inequality and understand its causes and effects but are motivated to do something to change the status quo.

Black Lives Matter.

Bohunt Education Trust Leaders, June 2020