

March 1st 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you publicly as The Diversity Roundtable, a collective of professionals and specialists working in the field of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), to express our alarm at the recent withdrawal of funding in multiple areas in schools and Further Education. The cuts include: The Department for Education's Equality and Diversity fund for school-led projects, to accelerate the diversification of protected characteristic groups in school leadership; English Second Other Language (ESOL) funding reduced by 50% in Further Education; and Equalities Office fund cut for anti-homophobic and anti-trans bullying. The lack of action concerning the Gender Reform Act has been disappointing, considering the anti-trans rhetoric nationally.

Now is a critical time for the Department for Education to enable schools and colleges to address structural inequity. We ask for a staged approach to impact on the sector to apply and embed professional learning from research specifically around race; embed best practice to update policy enactment; facilitate organisational change through specialist intervention and apply DEI sector knowledge to increase recruitment and retention both in leadership and the wider teacher workforce (see Appendix A).

The current situation suggests nationally and internationally discourse about and impact on protected characteristic groups has been the most significant in a generation. Events such as the brutal murder of George Floyd by a representative of a public sector organisation and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests have influenced the direction of the country underlining significant inequity in the structures of our institutions. Currently schools and colleges face these challenges without any funding to address legacies of inaction.

We feel it is highly problematic not to address such concerns when research identifies schools as sites where racism is grown through structures (Warmington, 2020; Callender, 2020; Callender and Miller, 2019; Lander 2017; Bhopal, 2018; Gillborn, 2015; Parker and Roberts, 2011; Marx 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Williams 1991). Racism is fostered and, at best, passively nurtured through professional gaps in knowledge and skills of DEI, uncritical pedagogic and curricula approaches and a limited range of lived experiences in leadership to address such practice. In addition, schools and colleges face historic bias in curricula, unchallenged majoritarian attitudes in the workforce and are now responding to families demanding change for their children.

We believe inequity in our schools presents a national challenge that needs to be addressed with national funding. It is our hope that in accordance with the Equality Act and

Public Sector Equality Duty (2010) all families, teachers, support staff and children, regardless of where they live, how many schools are in their Trust or the funding situation of their Local Authority, be protected from systemic inequalities in schools. We therefore ask for specific DEI funding for schools and colleges in order to provide geographical parity across the United Kingdom. We believe action is required in the following areas:

1. Funding to address lack of racial diversity in leadership;
2. Funding and training to protect students and staff from inequity in schools through addressing gaps in Teacher Standards;
3. Funding to support serious focus on those with protected characteristics in the recruitment and retention strategies both in school and in Initial Teacher Education;
4. Funding for schools and colleges to address professional gaps in curricula knowledge and skills.

The government has a responsibility to ensure that the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000), the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty (2010) are upheld. School and college leaders have taken seriously and demonstrated agency in their responsibility to challenge structural discrimination and inequality for many years; examples such as Anderton Park Primary in Birmingham demonstrate the cost, time and nuanced complexity of this work for staff and the wider impact of upholding the law for communities and families.

The social and educational impact of COVID 19 and wider effects of the pandemic on people from different social class and Ethnic Minority backgrounds has underlined outcomes gained by structural privilege and laid bare the failure of our institutional structures to support children adequately at the point of need. It will be these families further disadvantaged by a workforce representing, interpreting and enacting policy by privileged groups in society.

It is our hope the Department seize this opportunity to provide funding and a structured approach to supporting schools and colleges to manage change. The teacher workforce is ready, invested and motivated to address structural inequity but needs funding and guidance in order to impact on children and staff as well as the communities they serve.

We extend an invitation to meet with the Diversity Roundtable by contacting the Chairs at [hello@hannah-wilson.co.uk](mailto:hello@hannah-wilson.co.uk) and [hello@angelabrowne.co.uk](mailto:hello@angelabrowne.co.uk) to co-create ways forward.

Yours Faithfully,

**Co-organiser of the Diversity Roundtable:**

- Angela Browne, Director, Nourished Collective
- Claire Stewart-Hall, Director, Equitable Coaching
- Hannah Jepson, Director, Engaging Success
- Hannah Wilson, Co-Founder and Director, Diverse Educators

## **Members of the Diversity Roundtable:**

- Adam McCann, CEO, Diversity Role Models
- Aisha Thomas, Director, Representation Matters Ltd
- Professor Dame Alison Peacock, CEO, Chartered College of Teaching
- Ann Marie Christian, Child 1st Consultancy Limited
- Dr Anna Carlile, Head of the Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London
- Aretha Banton, Co-Founder, Mindful Equity UK
- Dr Artemi Sakellariadis, Director, Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE)
- Beth Bramley, Gender Balance Manager, Institute of Physics
- Daniel Gray, Director, LGBTed
- Diana Osagie, CEO, Courageous Leadership & The Academy of Women's Leadership
- Domini Leong, Chair, BAMEdSW
- Elizabeth Wright, Editor of Disability Review Magazine, DisabilityEd Ambassador
- Emma Hollis, Executive Director, NASBTT
- Emma Sheppard, Founder, The MaternityTeacher PaternityTeacher Project
- James Noble-Rogers, Executive Director, UCET
- Kiran Gill, CEO, The Difference
- Laila El-Metoui, Founder, Pride in Education and Educating Out Racism
- Liz Moore, Chief Executive, Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT)
- Lorraine Hughes, Director of Education, Chiltern Learning Trust
- Mareme Mufwoko, Steering Group, WomenEd England
- Marius Frank, Director, Achievement for All
- Nadine Bernard, Founder, Aspiring Heads CIC
- Nicole Ponsford, Founder, Global Equality Collective (GEC)
- Pat Joseph, ARISetime
- Paul Whiteman, General Secretary, NAHT (National Association Head Teachers - school leadership union)
- Ruth Golding, Founder, DisabilityEd
- Sharon Porter, SPorterEdu Consulting
- Professor Emeritus of the Harvey Milk Institute, Sue Sanders, Schools OUT UK
- Sufian Sadiq, Director, Chiltern Teaching School Alliance
- Susie Green, CEO, Mermaids
- Professor Vini Lander, Director, The Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality, Carnegie School of Education
- Viv Grant, Director, Integrity Coaching Ltd
- Youlande Harrowell, Co-Founder, Mindful Equity UK
- Allana Gay, BAMEd

## **Appendix A**

### **Increasing Recruitment and Retention**

Currently processes of recruitment and retention have led to a national figure of 14% of teachers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds (sic) teaching in schools (DfE, 2020). Under 5% of Head Teachers come from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, despite areas with significantly higher numbers of people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the wider population (DfE, 2020). This has been consistent for some years without much scrutiny from the Department for Education; it was sadly not addressed specifically in the DfE Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2019).

It remains less likely that people with protected characteristics will be able to join the profession or be retained in schools without cultures, processes and practices actively challenging existing structural barriers that lie within school structures (NEU/Runnymede, 2020). In addition, there remains a persistent lack of diversity in school governance, which contributes to and sustains the status quo in appointment to posts.

The Equality and Diversity fund: for school-led projects recognised the underrepresentation in leadership providing one avenue for schools to address inequity. Without such funding, schools will continue to enact practices that exclude and maintain majoritarian cultures as the 'norm' thereby families, children and staff will continue to feel marginalised and discriminated against.

### **Diversity as a Business Model**

The McKinsey report (2020) demonstrates that as an organisational business model this approach is flawed. There is now a plethora of reports, including from national government, outlining the business case for wider diversity and representation in organisations as means to meet demand and increase success rates (McKinsey, 2015; McGregor-Smith, 2017; Diversity at the Top, CIPD 2017, Ethnic bias in recruitment, CIPD 2019; Breaking Barriers to Inclusive Recruitment, CIPD, 2018; Recognising the bias in recruitment, CIPD, 2018). Past experience shows the sector that unless equity safeguards are consciously included, the effect of new policies is frequently to reinforce existing gender, race and class inequalities (Gillborn, 2014). In light of the Department for Education's role in leading expectations for schools, fair and equitable working environments and creating a world class education system that actively prevents discrimination, we would ask that this decision is reviewed immediately.