

Written Submissions and Further Information for Members' Consideration

Written submissions were received from:

1. & 2. West of England Centre for Inclusive Living and Listening Partnership
3. Members of the Bristol Youth Council
4. Bristol Parent Carer Forum
5. Bristol City Council senior officers (Director: Education & Skills; Director: Children & Families)
6. Cabot Learning Federation
7. Trust in Learning Academies
8. Shirehampton Primary School
9. Learning Partnership West
10. Sirona Care & Health
11. Bristol Mayoral Commission on Race Equality
12. Office of the Children's Commissioner
13. Royal National Institute of Blind People
14. Sutton Trust
15. Dr Neil Harrison, Oxford University
16. Professor Anna Gupta, Royal Holloway University
17. Professor David Berridge, University of Bristol

Note: written submissions are enclosed where consent for publication alongside the working group report has been given by participants.

Further information received:

1. Bristol City Council Data pack and SEND briefing
2. White Paper March 2022 - overview of key points
3. Belonging Strategy consultation and focus groups
4. Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (Participation Guidance for Education and Youth Settings event)

People Scrutiny Working Group: Evidence from

What can help enable all children reach their potential within mainstream education?

WECIL is the West of England Centre for Inclusive Living, an organisation led by Disabled people. The term 'SEND' is used in this paper, but we recognise it is not one that comes from a disability equality/social model perspective). Appendix 1 are the crucial direct views of young people with 'SEND' gathered from the Listening Partnership on Monday 21st March.

More clarity about the meaning of 'inclusion': Many schools demonstrate 'integration' i.e. they have children with SEND in the school, but they expect them to change to 'fit in' with their existing norms and practices. Their difference is at best tolerated, but not celebrated, and needs are not met. Fewer schools are really practicing inclusion. **Inclusion involves changing policies, practices, curriculum, support and teaching methods to ensure that they meet the individual needs of every child in the school. Every pupil is not just fully included in lessons, but also in every other aspect of school life.** Inclusion also means that Disabled adults are visible as part of the school community as teachers, other staff, parents/carers, grandparents and visitors, and are also fully included in school life. Inclusion is not just being placed in a mainstream setting, but it is **'Being there, but also being a full part of everything, feeling safe and feeling you belong and are welcome'**. (Quote from Disabled young person)

Strategic overview: Bristol City Council needs to have a clear vision, strategy and plan for increasing inclusion, which schools/academies support. The LA had an Inclusive Education Policy in the early 1990s, developed in partnership with Disabled people's and parents' organisations, which was really clear about what inclusion is, and what was expected of schools. There was also a clear plan for the development of more inclusive provision (e.g. the gradual co-location of special and mainstream schools with plans to optimise inclusion opportunities, and the development of inclusion resource bases in mainstream schools so pupils had access to mainstream peers and opportunities, but with specialist teaching and support) . **Bristol Inclusion Standard should be reintroduced**, as this was a way for schools to evaluate their provision against inclusion principles, share and celebrate best practice. Many schools also used to use the Index for Inclusion produced by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education [Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education \(csie.org.uk\)](http://csie.org.uk) Recently, there has been less clarity about what an inclusive school looks like, and where best practice exists.

Meeting legal requirements: Schools and academies need to understand their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 [Equality Act Advice Final.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61621/equality-act-advice-final.pdf). Advice for schools is that Disabled young people can be treated more favourably, and schools may have to make changes to practices to ensure they have the same opportunities as their peers. Schools should not just be making reasonable adjustments for individual children with SEND that they admit, but have an **anticipatory duty to adapt information, the curriculum and physical environment** in anticipation of having a range of Disabled children and adults in their wider community (e.g. information in different formats (Braille, Easy Read etc), BSL interpreters where needed, access improvements to buildings and the environment. **Schools should have Access Policies and Action Plans in place** and these should be checked and monitored, and they should all include disability equality issues in their annual Equality Objectives

Admissions: Schools should be encouraged to prioritise children with SEND (but without EHCPs) in their admissions policies, as they do with Children in Care (eg Fairfield School used to have 'Children who have exceptional social or medical needs' as an oversubscription criteria, but this seems to have stopped after 2021). Although there is a separate process for admitting children with EHCPs to schools, the Consult process is time consuming for SENDCOs and does not address inclusion and disability equality. If children are admitted, as it is a parallel data process, often their details don't appear on SIMs so the initial days of admission are difficult to plan.

Funding: There needs to be clarity about the way that schools and academies spend their notional SEND funding and they should be held to account for this by their Governing

People Scrutiny Working Group: Evidence from

Bodies/Trusts etc. Most governors are not aware of how much the money their school receives, and what it is used for, as it is not ringfenced. The narrative is often that the schools can't afford to include children with SEND, but this funding, if pooled and managed in a way that ensures it enhances inclusion, could significantly improve mainstream support.

Teacher training: More time should be dedicated to inclusive practice in initial teacher training, so all newly qualified teachers feel confident in meeting a range of needs in their classroom. Many new teachers are unaware of basic strategies needed to meet the needs of the range of children they are expected to teach in mainstream. Initial training, as well specialist post qualification SENDCO training, and Continuing Professional Development needs to include far more on inclusive practice and disability equality, and Disabled people who went through the system need to be heard. Opportunities need to be developed for staff to observe and learn from specialist SEND staff in their own schools and other settings. **Inclusive practice needs to be a key component of all leadership programmes.**

Curriculum: Disability equality should be reflected in all aspects of an inclusive curriculum. More attention has been given recently to diversifying the curriculum in relation to race equality, but little is ever included about Disability. [Microsoft Word - Teacherfactsheetfinal.doc \(inclusivechoice.com\)](#) and many other resources are available to find ways to ensure Disabled people and their history are visible. If Disabled people come into schools as visitors, it is often to talk about a charity like 'Guide Dogs for the Blind' and this reinforces the charitable model. Children with SEND need to see adults like themselves in successful careers and to see their role in history, as do other children. **Particular attention needs to be given to not narrowing the curriculum for young people with SEND**, and extending the range of qualifications available, as they may often excel at subjects outside the E-Bac, and they also need the widest extra-curricular opportunities, which may require funding for access and appropriate support.

Anti-bullying Policies need to be reviewed to ensure that bullying of young people due to a difference in intellectual or physical ability or behaviour is just as unacceptable as any other discrimination. This is often not the case, and many negative terms that are used to describe children with SEND are routinely used in the playground and not addressed.

There needs to be far more differentiation of Behaviour policies so that they take into account the different needs of any pupils with SEND and reduce suspensions. Children with SEND should only be suspended in exceptional circumstances. Traditionally policies have been one size fits all documents looking at sanctions and rewards for adhering to rules. They need to be far more trauma informed, and reflect inclusive principles and practice, so that they support children with emotional and social issues to stay in the school and remain included.

Reviewing outcomes: All pupils with SEND need to feel that they are achieving and progressing and to have this acknowledged through their results. There need to be far more sophisticated ways to assess and celebrate the achievements of children with SEND. Often their outcomes are only looked at in terms of their key stage results compared to peers, and the national SEND outcomes (which are pretty meaningless due to the complexities of the group).

Children need to see Disabled role models in their schools and the voices of pupils with SEND must be heard and inform inclusive practice. The debate on inclusion locally has not been co-produced with the people for whom it is designed. Young people with additional needs know what works, as do adults who went through the various systems, and they have to be central to any planning, and their voices must be heard. Few Governing bodies, staff or leadership teams include Disabled people, and disability amongst staff is too often seen as a reason to leave the profession. Schools also need to be far more aware of 'reasonable adjustments' and the support available to retain Disabled staff.

Appendix 1: The views of the Listening Partnership (a group of young people with SEND) on how to make education more inclusive:

We asked the group what their experiences of education had been, and what could change to make it more inclusive. The young people attended a range of settings including mainstream school; a unit within mainstream school; 'special' school and college.

Barriers within the processes

'They didn't read the EHCP, so didn't sort out the requirements'

'School have said they need to see official paperwork about a diagnosis before they'll do anything'

'They bought me in on a complete disadvantage to everyone else. I'm meant to have a typist, but they didn't capture what I need or sometimes they just don't show up at all even though it's on my EHCP. They're not inclusive at all.'

'I don't feel like I belong at school because I don't feel welcome'

Teacher attitudes and understanding

'I felt hated by teachers and I couldn't understand why'

'Teachers don't seem to be aware of hidden disabilities'

'I felt teachers were annoyed by my 'slowness''

'I got sent to the headteacher a lot as they thought my behaviour was naughty, but I think they didn't understand my needs'

'I get really distracted if other people are talking or making a noise. This impacts on my learning. My English GCSE grade has gone from a Level 6 to a Level 2 because the teacher doesn't understand my needs'

'Teachers haven't helped at all. Other children called me names and parents complained about me being in the class with their children. I used to hide in the bathroom. I was taken out of class and put with a TA.'

'I sometimes need to use my wheelchair, but staff don't understand my health issue and that I sometimes need to sit down and how long things take for me to do. I've asked them to look at my EHCP but they don't seem to take any notice'

Pupil attitudes

‘My school was good. I had friends from my autism unit, I spoke to people in the mainstream part, but they told me I shouldn’t be there on my own’

‘I went to a boarding school and had some really good 1:1 sessions, but I got bullied by one person throughout my experience there’

‘It was the worst time of my life. I sat at the back in the corner. I was bullied and assaulted because of my special needs.’

‘I felt vulnerable. I was bullied at primary school and this stayed with me into secondary school’

Meeting individual needs

‘During science lessons one minute we were talking about animals and the next we were talking about fire. It is hard for me to process the change so quickly’

Physical barriers

‘School and college is crowded all the time. There aren’t enough seats to sit on and not enough personal space.’

‘There is too much noise – even the library is loud. Sometimes the teacher takes me out of class and I miss out on lessons and learning.’

‘I have to go to a school which is a long way away and the taxi to school takes too long.’

What would help make schools more inclusive?

‘Having access to quiet spaces’

‘Have more 1:1 funding for specific support’

‘Better understanding of hidden disabilities’

‘Worksheets or documents in larger, accessible fonts’

‘Read and act on EHCPs’

‘Having more time for teachers to plan and organise lessons so they are more accessible’

‘Listen, understand, care and take action’

01

BCC Local Policy

Approaches Bristol City Council could offer to support this

EHCPs that are issued with funding to stop 3 month delay in meeting needs

EHCP input that matches needs to provisions to ensure provision is effective

Provide central gov with a clearer picture of local situation, stop minimising need

Understanding that mainstream (however inclusive) isn't right for every child

Earlier access to services in school, particularly the Bristol Autism Team who do not help children until they are diagnosed (2 year wait) as well as greater availability EP & SEMH support

02

CCG Local Policy

Approaches the Clinical Commissioning Group could offer to support this

Better method for sharing professional knowledge between those that know (SaLTs for eg) & those that do (TAs)

Providing advice for all children via EHCP as legally required so all needs are known

Early identification of needs, SaLT service don't accept referral until 28 months old for example

Online pre recorded resources around areas of need and how families can support their children

Monitoring of referrals that are rejected on referral

03

SC Local Policy

Approaches Social Care could offer to support this

Better information available on support services and eligibility for support

Social care workers who work with the family so there is less 'parent blaming'

Links with schools around SEMH needs and how schools can support these needs

A service for autistic children as currently there is a commissioning gap

Social care assessments for autistic learners with actual provision that matches theirs and their families needs, if parents are supported they are better equipped to support their children

05

School Policies

Approaches Bristol's schools could offer or resources they need to support this

Training for all school staff on reasonable adjustments & behaviour = communication

Training for TAs and SENDCos on SEND screeners that identify needs ideally for free

SpLd training - learning improvement team sorely missed

Understating of SEND learners with no behavioural issues who still need support

Information on discrimination and how so many day to day things are discrimination

Trauma informed approach to behaviour with the end of "no tolerance"

Independent training beyond level 1 in EHCPs to hold LA to account & help families

Development of understanding on how unmet SEND leads to increased SEMH

Independent SEND training for governors

Discrimination training for heads and governors

Empathy & 'listening to families' training, to ensure support is early

Resources for and training in sensory needs and what sensory breaks look like

04

National Policies

Approaches that could be adopted nationally to support this

Better awareness of local area needs reflected in funding offered

Consequences for LAs that do not follow the law which delays needs being met

A consistent EHCP template that matches needs and provisions

A standard SENDCo training offer with hands on advice and less theory / History

Mandatory needs led raining of SEND to be included in teachers training

Targeted training and recruitment of teachers from different ethnic backgrounds



What can help enable all children reach their potential within mainstream education?

People Scrutiny Working Group

Evidence and information

Written by: Alison Hurley and Sarah Parker

Date: 13.04.22



Key Questions that we would like you to answer

- () **What can help enable all children reach their potential within mainstream education?**
This may include local policy and practice (the Council, and Education, Health and Community Safety Partners) and national policy and good practice; and also, whether you feel admissions policies have an impact on enabling inclusive mainstream education.

Please write no more than 2 sides of A4 using accessible language that can be easily understood by non-specialists in this field.

Effective inclusive practice and approaches must be at the heart of every mainstream setting, to ensure all children and young people have the very best chance of having their social, emotional and learning styles and needs identified and met early. Such an approach supports children feeling safe, secure and valued, and then benefit them to access life's opportunities, to effectively overcome the range of challenges and barriers they will face, throughout their school career and lifelong learning journey.

The United Nations have defined inclusive education as follows:

- A fundamental right to an education
- A principle that values students' wellbeing, dignity, autonomy and contribution to society
- A continuing process to eliminate barriers to education and promote reforms in culture, policy and practice in schools to include all children.

Inclusion is not about having a group of children and young people with additional needs in a school. It begins with the assumption that **all** children have a right to be in the same education space. It is about belonging and feeling welcome, as a result of systems led by shared positive values that celebrate and welcome diversity at all levels. Inclusion is not about Education, Health and Care Plans or Top Up funding. It is about all aspects of school life, enacted in playgrounds, staffrooms, classrooms, and communities, being driven by inclusive values. It is about holding all our young people in high positive regard. It is about everyone being welcome and celebrating our differences and uniqueness. It is not about discrimination on the grounds of ability, appearance, or any other characteristic. Fundamentally, inclusivity is about relationships and respect.

The focus for inclusive schooling needs to be the creation of school environments supportive of all children and young people, including those at risk of perceived 'failure' for a variety of reasons: SEND, poverty and homelessness, to name a few. Inclusion is a system, not just a school improvement and development issue but includes the wider community, parents and partners.

Inclusion should not be viewed simply as a special educational needs or behaviour management programme.

The 'Belonging Strategy', sets out a clear vision for Bristol's children and young people and the 'Belonging in Education' pillar is clear that addressing the systemic inequities, across the education sector, is fundamental to pupils' achievement and well-being. Relationship-based and trauma informed policy and practice is being adopted more widely across schools, enabling young people's needs to be better understood, met earlier and successfully addressed within the setting. However, the wide range of inconsistent practice across the city, results in too many children and young people being marginalised, demonised, and ultimately excluded from the system. Over-representation of black and minoritised pupils, those with SEND and those eligible for free school meals, could suggest evidence of discrimination or institutional bias in policy and practice.

England's education sector is too often described as 'fragmented', which leads to varied interpretations of key policies and guidance, resulting in inconsistencies in provision. There are several variables that contribute to such fragmentation including a lack of understanding of the trauma experienced by children and how this comes to bear through their interactions with the world. Further, a focus on compliance within some education settings can mean that children who do not fit within the paradigm of standardisation and conformity, are marginalised or seen as lesser abled or capable. All children across the spectrum of academic excellence deserve the professional curiosity, agility and resource to create a holistic and supportive approach that identifies their unique strengths. In part the 'results league table' and rigid approach to curriculum and academic achievement of children fails to identify and celebrate creativity, practical excellence and the richness of character of our children.

The role of the local authority has changed over the past ten years, with previous responsibilities and powers moving towards a greater, but more restrictive, focus on championing vulnerable children and young people, commissioning places, corporate parenting for children in care and systems led leadership for learning partners. Schools have become more autonomous from the local authority and the range of organisational-based arrangements, such as admissions policies, can exclude or marginalise, albeit unintentionally.

The recent publication of the Education White Paper and SEND Green Paper does go some way in attempting to re-dress the inequities and create greater alignment. There will be increased powers for Local Authorities, particularly in relation to attendance and admissions. Performance frameworks for Multi-academy Trusts (MAT) and Alternative Providers, seek to introduce robust standards. However, there is lack of detail about how schools will be incentivised to become more inclusive and the alignment with higher expectations on all schools to increase levels of achievement in numeracy and maths. Every school becoming a MAT will not in itself drive sufficient increases in mainstream inclusion.

**People Scrutiny Working Group -
Inclusive Mainstream Education in Bristol**



Evidence and information

Written by: Mark Davies

Organisation and role: Trust in Learning (Academies), Chief Executive

Date: 07/04/22

Question that we would like you to answer:

What can help enable all children reach their potential within mainstream education?

This may include local policy and practice (the Council, and Education, Health and Community Safety Partners) and national policy and good practice; and also, whether you feel admissions policies have an impact on enabling inclusive mainstream education.

Please write no more than 2 sides of A4 using accessible language that can be easily understood by non-specialists in this field.

Please send your response to scrutiny@bristol.gov.uk, FAO Dan Berlin, before 2pm, 30th March - Thank you.

- Clearer SEND Admissions approach with timescales and agreements all accessible through online portal.
- Improved EHCP forms with up to date and complete data, so a decision can be more easily made about whether a school can meet needs.
- EHCP form submitted to a school include all current educational levels for a child.
- Full agreement from the school that a child's needs can be met.
- If further funding is required to meet the child's needs (e.g. employing a TA), this should be available before the child starts and should not require paperwork for a top-up panel.
- Sufficient alternative provision/SEND spaces for children for whom mainstream really isn't working, enabling schools to spend more time on including SEND children who can thrive in mainstream.
- Visits from EPs within first 2 weeks of placing a child within a school to check the setting is fully understanding of needs and to answer any questions.
- More frequent reviews focused on education levels and outcomes.

Louisa Munton

Head Teacher, Shirehampton Primary School

To refer to:

- Ordinarily Available Provision: [Ordinarily Available Provision - Bristol's SEND Local Offer - bristol.gov.uk](#)
- Fair Access Protocol: [Fair Access Protocol - bristol.gov.uk](#)
- Specialist Resource Base – Canberra: [Shirehampton Primary - Specialist Resource Base - Canberra class](#)

The class in our Specialist Resource Base is called Canberra. All our classes are named after cities from around the world.

The above link takes you to their main page but there are other pages about curriculum coverage, how to help your child at home and weekly and termly home learning that can be accessed from this.



LPW's response to Bristol City Council's People Scrutiny Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the People Scrutiny Working Group on the topic of enabling Inclusive Mainstream Education in Bristol.

Locally and nationally we need:

Trauma-informed practice

Understanding of issues that lead to children and young people to behave in a way that leads to fixed term exclusions and permanent exclusions. Bristol has done a huge amount of work on awareness about adverse childhood experiences and trauma; this awareness now needs to move to trauma informed practice.

Behaviour policies based on relationships, that recognise behaviour is a form of communication. This will help schools to feel like a safe place.

School staff adapting their behaviour as well as expecting students to adapt their behaviour.

Analysis of who is excluded

Use local and national data.

Issues of disproportionality in exclusions, eg Black and Minoritised Ethnic students, Gypsy Roma Traveller students and students with special educational needs.

Use this information to design culturally appropriate responses to students' needs.

Culture and language

Inclusive curriculum - Subjects, qualifications, bias within curriculum – eg History only covers ethno-centric curriculum

Pro-active recruitment drive to increase diversity of workforce

Food in canteens not always culturally appropriate, school uniform policies not always culturally appropriate.

Adopt Halo code – students are allowed to wear their hair however they want.

Adaptive school uniform policy.

Change language – not that the student didn't engage, we didn't reach them

Mainstream schools to talk about how do we move you to school that will help you thrive rather than wait for something to go wrong and then label the student as aggressive, failing etc

Change in language to sorry we couldn't meet your needs, ALP shouldn't be seen as the student having failed, the system has failed, but let's not describe anyone as failing, talk instead about how best to meet the educational needs of the student.

Positive relationships with families

Engage when things are going well not just when not going so well, how to find ways to do this in a way that isn't too time-consuming for the school, eg list of vulnerable students, keep in touch with those families when things going well. Builds a positive relationship which makes it easier to have more difficult conversations.

Address points of transition, eg primary school has years of knowledge to share with secondary school.

Information sharing, communication – not just between schools, but also the local voluntary sector, other statutory partners

Link up with related policies, eg National Youth Agency's 10 year strategy linking youth workers to schools could have a positive impact on education.

Early intervention

Schools need to assess young people and then implement strategies = cultural shift, teachers don't always think of this as part of their role, they also need to make the change in how they engage with students, not always responsibility of an external organisation.

Early intervention – we know in primary school which children and young people are likely to be excluded, even moving at end of year 9 so ready to start at year 10 would be an improvement in later years.

Perceptions of Alternative Learning Provisions need to change

"You have to come to a bad school to do the good things" – young person at LPW school

Student voice

Not being tokenistic about hearing student voices, students be more involved in answering questions like why is this school not working for you? There is great practice in some Bristol schools.

Specialist support

Need to recruit Educational Psychologists and every school to have greater access to Education Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists.

There is a skill shortage within the SENCo sector, low numbers of SENCos.

Rethinking how the inclusion panel works

To support mainstream schools with inclusion without removal from schools, building on the recent safeguarding audit and new framework in place.

National issues

- Where children and young people are out of education for years, schools should be held accountable for breaking the law.
- Incentivise reintegration of students back into mainstream.
- Finances for ALP need to be more stable – it is in ALP's financial interests to hold on to students.
- Who pays for the support? We have the expertise in Bristol to keep students in school but how does the money move around the system to achieve this?
- Have schools reached a point where they are just too big? Cap at 100 per every year group. Then you can actually know every student.
- How do FTE and PEX figures compare across LA controlled schools and MATs – what influence can the LA have over schools and how? Schools need to be mandated to deal with students not exclude them, but very hard to do when have no control over MATs.
- There is lots of good practice locally and nationally, we need better fora for sharing this.

Training needs

- PGCE training courses should be reviewed to understand the emerging needs of the cohort, expecting an NQT to face and deal with some of the behaviours is not fair or realistic or even safe sometimes, for either the staff or the students.
- Social care and education working relationships and understanding of each other's systems, terminology etc

- National funding policies – all the systems are too stretched.
- Ofsted regime incentivises schools to exclude students, end the culture of league tables.



People Scrutiny Working Group

Inclusive Mainstream Education in Bristol

Evidence and information

Organisation and role: Mayoral Commission on Racial Equality (CoRE)

Written by: CoRE Secretariat

Date: Wednesday, 20th April, 2022.

INTERIM SUBMISSION

Our understanding is that Bristol City Council's People Scrutiny Commission has launched a Working Group to examine issues around enabling Inclusive Mainstream Education in Bristol. The Working Group is made up of cross-Party Councillors and has tasked itself to ask:

What can help enable all children reach their potential within mainstream education?

The Working Group invited responses that would help in the following ways:

- i. To identify the key challenges and opportunities to enable inclusive education in mainstream settings in Bristol (including local policy and practice, significance of admissions policies, and national policy).
- ii. To inform policy development within the Council and across mainstream educational settings to help address and overcome systemic barriers to inclusive mainstream education.

This submission from CoRE focusses on racial disparities in the education system in Bristol.

Our work in this area is led by Commissioners including Fatima Ali and Margaret Simmons Bird. Given the time constraints this is by necessity selective and should be treated as an interim submission.

Nonetheless, the Working Group will hopefully find the document will help scope the issues as indeed, we have found it necessary to do so for ourselves in setting key priorities within this broad field of inequalities in education.





Our submission is based mainly on preparations for and outcomes from a session held in public at which Alison Hurley, Director of Education and Skills attended. This meeting of the Commission on Racial Equality (CoRE) took place on Wednesday 23rd March 2022. It had meeting had a particular focus on the Education outcomes for Black and other minoritised children and young people in Bristol. It was a session held in public with about 30 members of the public/community in attendance in person, including a Q&A.

We were also delighted to welcome Mohammed Saddiq in his role as Chair of the Bristol Future Talent Partnership to the same meeting, where he gave a presentation on this ground-breaking initiative to increase employer engagement in schools to help develop the skills and career prospects of some of the most disadvantaged young people in the city.

The Commission meeting was held at City Hall between 5pm-7pm.

Overview:

- We are particularly concerned to get local level data to understand how far Black, Asian and other minority ethnic learners are lagging behind their counterparts from other ethnic groups, particularly post-Covid. The evidence we have included for reference in this submission is from the Education Policy Institute's (EPI) 2020 Annual Report and highlights the relationship between poverty and learning gaps for different groups of young people in education. The report cites for example that **in some areas, poorer pupils are over two full years of education behind** their peers by the time they take their GCSEs, including in Blackpool (26.3 months), Knowsley (24.7 months) and Plymouth (24.5 months). There has since been a DfE report on the extent of learning loss among pupils in England during 2021/22.
- Similarly, the EPI findings report that some ethnic groups have experienced growing inequalities over recent years. Black Caribbean pupils were 6.5 months behind White British pupils in 2011, but this gap has now regressed to 10.9 months, meaning that the gap has widened for Black Caribbean pupils by well over four months in the last eight years.
- The Working Group should be very concerned with the summary of findings reported to the Commission by SARI (Stand Against Racism and Inequality) regarding



racism in education and cases reported to them. SARI reports to the Commission that “We are inundated with cases from schools”. These are set out later in this report but demonstrate that there are yawning gaps in terms of information and data, partly a consequence of the looser reporting and oversight requirements from schools in the non-LA maintained sector. The Working Group should seek its own submission from SARI as what CoRE has reported here is in summary format.

- We are happy to share the presentation (attached to this submission/email) presented by the Director of Education and Skills which has data at a more granular level in some areas to help identify gaps, policy interventions and areas of focus in future.
- Finally, we have also included findings from a 2018 report by the then Children’s Commissioner for England which is stark in its conclusions and the failures of the education system to deliver to the needs of children from poorer and disadvantaged backgrounds. The Working Group should be looking for similar updated local level data for the city, so the post pandemic recovery is targeted at those most in need, mindful of the intersectionality between socio-economic/class characteristics and ethnicity in this case.
- Children who leave education at 18 without reaching Level 2 attainment.





CoRE based its enquiry on an earlier community consultation event held during 2020 at which education featured as one of the top priorities and the issues raised included the following:

- 1. Low expectations and few opportunities for students.**
- 2. BME staff recruitment and retention.**
- 3. School exclusions rates for BME students.**
- 4. Lack of parent/student advocacy; and**
- 5. Low school numbers, school places in specific areas of the city, quality of education provision and actions to promote and encourage schools to develop a more diverse/inclusive curriculum.**

More generally, the Commission was also interested to know:

- 6. How well Bristol schools and the young people are doing compared to national standards, including the performance of Black and other minoritised young people against national averages.**
- 7. What disparities exist between different ethnic groups in Bristol, comparisons with their white peers with a particular focus on attainment gaps, attendance, exclusions and identified additional needs that are monitored nationally/locally.**
- 8. To help us understand more about your own leverage and legal powers over academies and other providers in the education eco system. How do we work in way that we are able to influence these issues across the city and to work in partnership with BCC to make a real and sustainable difference for Black and other minoritised young people; and finally**
- 9. The department's Education Race Equality Action plan to address known racial/ethnic disparities and inequalities.**

Finally, by way of moving forward, CoRE has a Task Group on Education which is chaired by Fatima Ali, a local teacher. Fatima is joining the Chair of CoRE to begin the process of collaboration through her Task Group and the department of Education and Skills so that our own focus and action planning is supported with the best available data/evidence from the department.



BACKGROUND:

CoRE 2020 Community Consultation Summary of Key Facts/Issues of concern:

‘The age profile of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population is much younger than the age profile of the Bristol population as a whole. The proportion of children (aged 0- 15) who belong to a BAME group is 28%, the proportion of people of working age (aged 16-64) who belong to a BAME group is 15%.’ (BCC, 2021).

1. BAME students’ academic attainment:

The data shows a significant gap in educational attainment over decades for BAME learners across primary and secondary schools when compared nationally and locally to their white peers. Indicators for educational attainment at early years, 5-7 years, 7-11 years and 11-16 years are collected and disaggregated by ethnicity at local authority level.

2. BAME staff recruitment and retention:

Nationally, 14.3% of teachers are from minority ethnic groups (DfE, 2021). Statistically, there are fewer minoritized teachers working in Bristol schools than the national average: 9% of Bristol teaching staff are from ‘minority ethnic backgrounds’ (DfE, 2019). Even though 91% of their teachers identify as White British (DfE 2019), over a third of Bristol students come from minoritized ethnic groups (38% of primary and 34% of secondary). In their landmark report, ‘Bristol - a city divided’, the Runnymede Trust cited ‘unrepresentativeness of teaching staff and school leadership as a factor in the underachievement of BME learners’ (Elahi, Finney, and Lymperopoulou, 2017). There is also an increasing media spotlight on the low number of minoritized teachers in Bristol (BBC, 2018).

3. BAME students’ attendance and exclusion rates

The data also shows over-representation of BAME groups in school absences and exclusions with BAME learners with special additional needs and/or disabilities being particularly over-represented. Indicators concerning absence and exclusions at early years, 5-7 years, 7-11 years, and 11-16 years are collected and disaggregated by ethnicity at local authority level.



4. Lack of parent/student advocacy
5. Low school numbers, school places in specific areas of the city, quality of education provision and actions to promote and encourage schools to develop a more diverse/inclusive curriculum.



Discussion at CoRE Meeting in Public with Alison Hurley (AH) Director of Education and Skills:

The Commission received a presentation (attached to this submission for the Committee's reference) from which additional questions arose for the Director of Education and Skills about the state of race equality in Education in Bristol:

1. Why does (Alison Hurley) think this strategy will have the desired impact?

AH: DoFE is analysing data differently. The focus is on localised data as opposed to macro data. Currently, data is at a school-based level and new leaders have been put in place to move the system forward. The same scrutiny of data was not present two years ago.

2. Is the education sector getting their priorities, right?

AH: All priorities in the strategy are happening at the same time. While the local authority cannot direct how it used to, it can challenge schools on their data.

3. How do you intend on increasing BME teachers/governors?

AH: The One Bristol Curriculum alongside the Black Governors Network are both investigating how to increase BME governors and organising equality and inclusion training at schools.

4. Schools have resorted to managed transfers in order to decrease exclusion rates. How does the education sector plan to tackle this?

AH: There is no statutory mechanism to create specific reporting. There is a newly appointed Attendance Officer to analyse school level data regarding part time timetables and managed transfers.

5. Students in the Bristol Inclusion Panel have been pushed back to their academies.

AH: The Director views children going back to mainstream schools as positive, as children's education won't be disrupted. The education sector must challenge inclusion policy at schools to accommodate all young people as opposed to moving them around.

A local teacher mentions in response "There is no proactive support for schools, so they resort to exclusions."



6. How do we have a more inclusive curriculum?

AH: The curriculum is not a priority for the Education and Skills focus group, as there is work going on in this area nationwide. The priorities for the focus group are geared towards trauma centred approaches to conflict resolution.

7. How do we identify teachers who have had issues with BME young people and correct these behaviours?

AH: The education sector expects school leaders to identify specific issues in their own schools and take responsibility for tackling this. Not much can be done on a statutory level.

8. AH was asked about her opinions on Child Q in LB Hackney.

AH: We must identify where the system failed and understand the issue from a family/parent/young person's perspective. This is a whole system approach.





Racism in context – Report from Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI) report

CoRE will be receiving regular reports from SARI at future meetings to help us better understand what is happening in the wider community.

SARI is currently inundated with cases from schools – they are looking to hire someone specifically for education due to the volume of the cases.

In 2019-2020, most of their complaints came from secondary schools.

In 2020-2021, majority of their cases came from primary schools. Most of these complaints were for racist incidents: racist name-calling, victimization, racist depictions, name-calling and isolating students based on race.

SARI has identified a lack of school responses to racist abuse – schools tend to brush it off or choose to exclude the victims.

SARI also notes that **the legal due process of exclusion is not followed** here and are actively challenging this.

SARI has **found that schools use permanent exclusion of victims as a method for dealing with racist incidents**.

Students are getting in trouble for saying their teachers are racist – they are either threatened with police action by teachers or told that reporting racism will hinder their career prospects.

SARI's recent cases parallel with Child Q due to the "adultification bias".

SARI has not brought schools together to discuss these issues. SARI **finds it difficult to gain access into schools** – they often don't respond to SARI's emails.

SARI receives new cases when schools or parents report racist incidents to them. **Schools find it difficult to deal with racist incidents**, so look to SARI to deal with these incidents for them.

It is proving difficult for SARI to report on **how many unreported cases there are**, as it depends how schools classify behaviour.

It is not clear **how the difference between reporting in local authority maintained schools and academies is handled**. BCC should put into place a process to handle racist incidents and schools, and CoRE could have a role to play in this.





Crucially, **racist incident reporting to schools is no longer mandatory** – some schools self-report, but the lack of regulation means most incidents go unreported.

Referrals to SARI overall are up by 8% despite COVID-19 shutting things down for quite a bit of the year.

Hate Crime referrals are up for all strands with Race being by far the largest category at 72% of all referrals.

In terms of ethnicity – % of Asian clients remained the same; % Black clients (especially Somali) reduced; % Mixed Heritage increased; Middle Eastern increased; SE Asian increased; Eastern European increased; GRT increased.

In terms of faith – 26% Muslim; 29% Christian. The percentage of cases for Muslim clients is less than last year (32%); Christian clients remained the same.

Incidents are happening less around the home (though by far largest category); more at work; attacks in clubs/ parks/ public places have increased, as well as schools.

Type of incidents: arson has increased; assaults have increased; verbal abuse have decreased; bullying of children has increased alongside police complaints.

Where (Bristol only): Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston; Hartcliffe and Withywood and Filwood are of concern.

“Biggest concern right now are school cases. They are really coming in thick and fast with Black and Asian parents feeling very discriminated against. Mirrors Child Q in many ways.”



Children's Commissioner for England (2018)

Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England, has published research looking at the number of children who leave the education system at 18 without reaching Level 2 attainment (five GCSEs grade A* to C, or equivalent technical qualifications). These are children who will have spent 14 years in compulsory education, often having more than £100,000 of public money spent on their education, and yet are leaving the education system without basic benchmark qualifications. This hampers their chances of finding apprenticeships or good jobs.

The Children's Commissioner's analysis reveals that in 2018, 98,799 children in England (18% of all school leavers) left education at 18 without substantive qualifications (reaching Level 2 attainment). This rate is now rising after it fell continuously between 2005 and 2015. The Commissioner's research shows this rise is being driven by a sharp increase in the proportion of pupils receiving Free School Meals (FSM) failing to achieve these targets. Since 2015, the number of children receiving FSM who have left education without proper qualifications has increased to 28,225 – up from 28% to 37% of all education leavers in England.

Children who leave education at 18 without reaching Level 2 attainment



The research shows that while children are now in education for longer, more of them are failing to get basic qualifications. This means that hundreds of thousands of young people are leaving education without the necessary qualifications to begin certain apprenticeships or start technical or academic courses. This is despite the compulsory education age in England extending to 18 during this period and children therefore being in education for longer. In 2015, 6.6% of 16-18 year olds were not in education, employment or training. By the end of 2018 this had dropped to 6.3%. This means that children spent more time in education yet were still more likely to leave without basic qualifications.

The report also found that:

- Attainment gaps between Special Educational Needs and non-SEN pupils by age 19 have risen from 26% in 2015 to 33% in 2018, making SEN students the worst affected.
- The attainment gaps between children living in the least and most deprived areas of England has risen from 13% in 2015 to 17% in 2018.
- Children receiving Free School Meals who live in London had the best academic outcomes. London stood out for having the lowest attainment gaps between FSM and non-FSM at 11.9 percentage points in 2018. This contrasts with the East Midlands which had a far greater attainment gap of 27.8 percentage points in 2018.
- In 3 Local Authorities across England – Derby, North Lincolnshire and Swindon – less than half of FSM students are achieving Level 2 by age 19. Nottingham has the worst attainment rates across England with around a third of all children (32%) not being qualified to Level 2 by age 19.

In response to this research, the Children's Commissioner has today written to the Government, using her powers under Section 2C of the Children's Act 2004 to formally request that Ministers take action. Specifically, the Commissioner is asking the Department for Education to conduct an independent review into falling Level 2 attainment, to commit to halving the number of children failing to get a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 within five years, and for the Department to set out a clear action plan for improving opportunities



and attainment of children who do not achieve 5 GCSEs or equivalents by 16, including access to apprenticeships and vocational courses.

Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England, commenting on the research, said:

"It is shameful that last year almost 100,000 children in England left education at 18 without proper qualifications. It is particularly unacceptable that children growing up in the poorest areas of the country and children with special educational needs are most likely to leave school without reaching basic levels of attainment.

"While we should celebrate the progress that is being made in raising standards for millions of children, it should never be an acceptable part of the education system for thousands of children to leave with next to nothing.

"The Government must urgently investigate why the progress that has been made over recent years in closing the attainment gap has stalled and now going backwards and commit itself to halving over the next five years the number of children failing to gain a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19."



Bristol Commission on Race Equality | c/o Black South West Network, The Coach House, 2 Upper York Street, St Paul's, Bristol, BS2 8QN | Email: bristolcore@gmail.com

Education in England: Annual Report of the Education Policy Institute (2020)

The education disadvantage gap: the latest trends

The disadvantage gap in England has stopped closing, and there are now several strong indications that it has started to widen:

- **At secondary school**, by the time they take their GCSEs, disadvantaged pupils (those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years) are over **18.1 months of learning** behind their peers. This gap is the same as it was five years ago.
- **At primary school**, the gap between poorer pupils and their peers is **9.3 months**, having increased for the first time since at least 2007. This could be a turning point, in which the disadvantage gap now continues to widen at this phase.
- **In the early years** (pupils in Reception year), the gap has stagnated at **4.6 months**, having largely stayed the same since 2013.
- **When will the gap close?** Last year EPI modelled that it would take over 500 years to eliminate the disadvantage gap at GCSE, based on the rate of progress. This year's data suggests an even more extreme conclusion: the gap is no longer closing at all.

How do different levels of poverty affect the disadvantage gap?

This year for the very first time, EPI researchers have analysed the gap for pupils across different levels of disadvantage:

- **Children with a high persistence of poverty** (those on free school meals for over 80% of their time at school) have a learning gap of **22.7 months** – twice that of children with a **low persistence of poverty** (those on free schools meals for less than 20% of their time at school), who have a learning gap **11.3 months**.
- Progress in closing the gap has been slowest for pupils with a high persistence of poverty, with the gap remaining much the same after almost a decade. Disadvantaged pupils with lower persistence of poverty have also experienced worsening gaps, although to a lesser degree.
- **Significantly, the proportion of pupils with a high persistence of poverty is on the rise.** Since 2017, the proportion of pupils in this group has risen from 34.8% to



36.7%. This recent increase appears to be an important contributor to the lack of progress with the gap overall.

How does the disadvantage gap vary in different areas in England?

Across the country, there is wide variation in the disadvantage gap:

- Large disadvantage gaps remain well-established in several regions in England but are particularly acute in the North, West Midlands and parts of the South.
- **In some areas, poorer pupils are over two full years of education behind** their peers by the time they take their GCSEs, including in Blackpool (26.3 months), Knowsley (24.7 months) and Plymouth (24.5 months).
- **In contrast, there are very low GCSE disadvantage gaps concentrated in London**, including in Ealing (4.6 months), Redbridge (2.7 months) and Westminster (0.5 months).

This year, for the first time, EPI researchers have also calculated the disadvantage gap at a local level after having controlled for high persistence of poverty in each area.

This reveals that differences in local demographics are essential to understanding why gaps are different in different parts of the country. **Under this adjusted measure, many areas that currently rank as some of the worst in the country substantially improve their position once high persistent poverty levels are considered:**

- Out of 150 local authorities in England, Knowsley is ranked as having the second-worst education disadvantage gap in the whole country. However, it improves its ranking by 28 places after having adjusted for persistent poverty levels.
- Other areas also see big changes in their rankings under this poverty-adjusted measure: Sunderland moves from having the 12th largest gap to 55th, Liverpool from 23rd largest to 83rd, Hartlepool from 25th largest to 65th.
- Each of these areas have large disadvantage gaps, but a major reason for this may be the large proportion of poor children who are in persistent poverty.





Equally, the poverty-adjusted measure also highlights areas which should be performing better, given their favourable local demographics:

- Surrey makes the biggest fall down the rankings after having adjusted for poverty levels, by 30 places (84th to 54th worst gap).
- Other local authorities who lose out significantly in the rankings after applying this measure include Wiltshire (53rd to 26th worst gap), Leicestershire (71st to 43rd worst gap) and Buckinghamshire (104th to 78th worst gap).

Areas with the largest education disadvantage gaps, adjusting for persistent poverty:

Controlling for persistent poverty levels, out of 150 local authorities, areas with the largest gaps in the country are now South Gloucestershire (worst disadvantage gap), West Berkshire (second worst gap) and Blackpool (third worst gap).

(A full breakdown of all local disadvantage gaps, including by parliamentary constituency and other levels, can be found here).

How does educational attainment vary by pupil ethnicity?

Attainment varies significantly among pupil ethnic groups:

- Gypsy/Roma pupils are almost three years (34 months) behind White British pupils at GCSE level. In contrast, Chinese pupils are two whole years (23.9 months) ahead of White British pupils in learning at this stage of their education.
- Some ethnic groups have experienced growing inequalities over recent years. Black Caribbean pupils were 6.5 months behind White British pupils in 2011, but this gap has now regressed to 10.9 months, meaning that the gap has widened for Black Caribbean pupils by well over four months in the last eight years.
- Gaps have also widened for pupils from other black backgrounds, and for pupils with English as an additional language who arrived late to the school system.
- EPI researchers plan to carry out further work to better understand the factors behind these significant ethnicity gaps and the changes in the gaps over time. While it is likely that poverty is contributing to some of these trends, there is also a need to understand the extent to which other societal and educational factors are creating and worsening inequalities amongst these groups of pupils.



How does the disadvantage gap vary among more vulnerable pupil groups?

For the very first time, EPI researchers have measured the trend in the disadvantage gap for children in the care system (known as 'looked after children') and children who are receiving support from children's services (known as 'children in need'). These pupils are significantly educationally disadvantaged:

- Looked after children (LAC) are nearly two and a half years (29.0 months) behind their peers by the time they finish their GCSEs. Progress in closing this gap is slow; it has reduced by only 1 month (3.3%) over the last six years.
- Children in need (CIN) are 20 months behind their peers, while children in need with a Child Protection Plan (typically those who have experienced neglect, or physical, sexual or emotional abuse) are over two years (26 months) behind their peers.
- It is notable that around a quarter of children with a Child Protection Plan do not receive either the Pupil Premium or Looked After Premium from the government. The large gaps among these groups support recent EPI proposals to extend the Looked After Premium to children with Child Protection plans.

Progress in reducing gaps for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has begun to slow since 2015, particularly for pupils with greater needs:

- Pupils with SEND who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (typically those with greater needs) are well over three years (41.1 months) behind their peers at the end of secondary school, while those with SEND without an EHCP are two full years (24.4 months) behind their peers.



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Whilst we haven’t been able to provide a written response to related specifically to Bristol, we hope our recent paper on our vision for the school system may be helpful to your consultation. [Ambition for all – our vision for a school system that works for all children | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/ambition-for-all-our-vision-for-a-school-system-that-works-for-all-children/)

Kind regards

Kathryn Parkinson

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner

Sutton Trust submission to Bristol City Council People Scrutiny Working Group

- What can help enable all children reach their potential within mainstream education?
 - *This may include local policy and practice (the Council and Education, Health, and Community Safety Partners) and national policy and good practice; and also, whether you feel admissions policies have an impact on enabling inclusive mainstream education.*

Introduction

The Sutton Trust champions social mobility through programmes, research and policy influence. Since 1997 and under the leadership of founder Sir Peter Lampl, the Sutton Trust has worked to address low levels of social mobility in the UK. The Trust works to improve social mobility from birth to the workplace so that every young person – no matter who their parents are, what school they go to, or where they live – has the chance to succeed in life.

The Sutton Trust has long advocated for changes to admissions policies for a fairer system. This would have benefits in terms of a more diverse social mix, attainment, teacher recruitment and retention. Changes to admissions policies could help to enable inclusive mainstream education. Further detail on our proposals can be found below.

The information below is drawn from the following key reports and research briefings:

[Fairer School Admissions – Social segregation in schools: the view from parents & teachers, February 2020](#)

[School Places: A Fair Choice? School choice, inequality and options for reform of school admissions in England, February 2020](#)

[Selective Comprehensives 2017: Admissions to high-attaining non-selective schools for disadvantaged pupils, March 2017](#)

Key figures

Sutton Trust research in March 2017 looked into the social composition of the country's top 500 comprehensive schools. It found that:

- The top performing 500 comprehensive schools in England, based on GCSE attainment, are socially selective, taking just 9.4% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals, just over half the rate of the average comprehensive (17.2%).
- Half of this discrepancy can be explained by top performing schools being in areas of lower disadvantage, but the rest is a result of social selectivity in the admissions process.

In 2020, the Sutton Trust polled teachers, parents and school leaders to gather their views on state school admissions and social segregation in schools. The polling showed that:

- Half of school leaders think that social segregation is a problem in state schools, yet 43% say that they pay little to no attention to the social profile of their community in the school admissions process.
- Despite teachers recognising social segregation as a problem overall, they are not likely to recognise the impact in their own school. 74% of teachers in the most socially selective

schools believe their intake has an average or above average rate of disadvantaged pupils than their local area, despite data finding that it is much lower.

- 80% of parents believe that schools should have a mix of pupils from different backgrounds.
- 68% of teachers and 72% of school leaders believe reducing socio-economic segregation and improving the social mix would have a positive effect on comprehensive schools. These perceived benefits are backed up by the evidence, as schools with a greater social mix perform well on value-added 'Progress 8' scores.
- 62% of school leaders were open to conducting a fair admission review of their policies.

Under England's system of school choice, parents and carers can choose the schools they want to apply to, usually 3 or 6, depending on the area they live in. Sutton Trust evidence found that:

- Parents from poorer backgrounds submit as many school preferences as better-off parents and take account of school quality when making their choices, suggesting that it is school admissions criteria that disadvantages families from lower socio-economic groups.
- Oversubscribed schools primarily use proximity as the key factor for admissions, making houses near good schools more expensive, so access to the best schools is then affected by family income.

England's top comprehensive schools are, in practice, often highly socially selective, admitting much lower proportions of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds than the average, and even than the profile of children in their immediate locality. However, there are examples of good local practice in admissions policy that can help to remedy social segregation in comprehensive schools and enable inclusive mainstream education, where all children can reach their potential.

Options for reforming school admissions

There are several reforms which schools could implement to make admissions fairer. These include:

1. Marginal ballots

- In this system, the majority of school places would be determined by the existing priority structure for school admissions.
- However, the school reserves a fraction of places, for example 20%, which will be determined by a random draw. All applicants not already accepted through standard priorities is given a random number for the remaining places at the school, regardless of any other priority status.
- The fraction of students admitted in this way can vary anywhere from 10-50%, depending on preference for balance between admitting local children and ensuring a diverse intake.
- By tipping emphasis away slightly from proximity to the school, where the house price premium for living in the catchment area of a top school is around 20%, or £45,700 more than an average house in the same local authority, this opens the door to less advantage families who may be priced out of a catchment area.

- A well-chosen marginal ballot fraction would make a significant difference to the chances of admission to high-performing schools for those without the means to live very close to the school gates, while minimising the impact on the sense of community at school or the value of house prices in the area.

2. Simple priority for disadvantaged families

- From 2014, the School Admissions Code enabled schools to admit pupils based on eligibility for the Pupil Premium (PP).
- Schools that prioritise pupils who are eligible for PP often do so to a pre-specified quota of places, so as not to skew too heavily in favour of disadvantaged students.
- Such a proposal would ideally have area-wide agreement, so that all schools follow similar criteria. This can be challenging when many schools are now directly responsible for their admissions policy, but there is scope to broker agreements via a local authority. However, schools could work alone or in small groups (perhaps at a lower quota level) to improve access for PP students, even if agreement cannot be reached across an authority.

3. Banding tests

- The primary aim of banding tests is to achieve comprehensive intake in terms of ability.
- Typically, a school sets a test for all applicants and admits equal numbers of students from each ability band (usually quartiles). This ensures a greater range of ability in the school.
- Given that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have lower levels of prior achievement on average, it would ensure greater social mixing than a criterion based on geography.
- Banding admits pupils across the ability range of those who apply, but this may still not be representative of the local population.
- However, individual test scores cannot be considered beyond determining which band an applicant falls into. It cannot act as a tiebreaker for oversubscription, so other criteria must also be used in conjunction with this method.

4. Simplifying conditions for demonstrating religious observance

- Faith schools are among the most socially selective schools, making up 33.4% of the top 500 comprehensive schools in 2017, and admitting a lower proportion of FSM pupils than in their local area.
- Currently, schools are permitted to impose complex and varying criteria on applicants to judge religious observance. The Sutton Trust found evidence of one school ranking applicants for observed religiosity based on ten categories of religious practice.
- A possible approach would be to simplify criteria for demonstrating religious observance, such as a binary tick-box option for 'regular churchgoing', based on simple and clearly defined definitions.



- This may however reduce the usefulness of religious observance as a criterion for school admissions, thus requiring another criterion as a tiebreaker for oversubscribed schools.

**People Scrutiny Working Group -
Inclusive Mainstream Education in Bristol**



Evidence and information

Written by: Dr Neil Harrison

Organisation and role: Associate Professor, Rees Centre, University of Oxford

Date: 30th March 2022

Question that we would like you to answer:

What can help enable all children reach their potential within mainstream education?

This may include local policy and practice (the Council, and Education, Health and Community Safety Partners) and national policy and good practice; and also, whether you feel admissions policies have an impact on enabling inclusive mainstream education.

Please write no more than 2 sides of A4 using accessible language that can be easily understood by non-specialists in this field.

Please send your response to scrutiny@bristol.gov.uk, FAO Dan Berlin, before 2pm, 30th March - Thank you.

Introduction

This document briefly summarises a five-year national research study based at the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford – the ‘Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Awareness in Schools Programme’. We have been working with **305 schools** across **26 Local Authorities** in England, covering both primary and secondary phases. We will make our final report in October 2022 and the findings in this summary should therefore be treated as ‘provisional’ at this time.

Background

We know that many young people will experience significant negative events at some point in their childhood, including neglect, violence, maltreatment and poverty; some studies estimate the figure as high as one-in-three. This can have profound consequences for their ability to build trusted relationships with adults (‘attachment’) that underpin their feelings of security. It is also increasingly understood that traumatic experiences can influence brain development and a young person’s responses to stressful situations. These two elements can make it difficult for a young person to understand and regulate their emotions, especially in the context of school. As adults, we know that we can struggle to work when we are stressed or dealing with difficult emotions and the same principle applies to young people.

Some young people in this situation will be in care or have been allocated a social worker. Others will have been assessed as having special educational needs and/or have been diagnosed with a specific mental health condition. However, there will be many others whose circumstances are unknown or who do not meet the threshold for intervention. The inclusion of these young people is therefore an important issue for policy and practice, especially given the additional pressures and challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Attachment and trauma awareness

The last ten years have seen a grassroots movement among schools who are seeking to become ‘attachment aware’ or ‘trauma informed’ – the terms are largely interchangeable. This is a whole-school approach that aims to acknowledge the difficulties that some young people have outside school and their impact on readiness to learn and engage fully in the school community. Importantly, it is not an individual-level intervention with specific young people, but a shift in the way the school engages with young people in general. More information is available through the Attachment Research Community (<https://the-arc.org.uk>) and Trauma Informed Schools UK (<https://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk>).

There is no specific definition of an attachment and trauma aware school. Features tend to include a greater emphasis on empathy, emotional regulation, trusted relationships, use of language and restorative approaches. Each school finds its own ways to integrate this into policies and everyday practices, responding to local contexts and needs.

Research study

Our study has focused on the impact when schools receive training on attachment and trauma awareness. There is not a specific training package and the Local Authorities involved in the Programme have either chosen a commercial supplier or devised their own training through the Virtual School and/or Educational Psychology Service. To be involved in our study, this training needed to last at least one day in total and be delivered on a whole-school basis (i.e. with all staff

involved). The training typically focused on relevant theory from psychology and neuroscience, recent research findings, specific techniques to use with young people and guidance about how to integrate and embed this within the school. To assess the impact of the training, we have used 'before and after' online surveys with staff and young people across all 305 schools, combined with interviews and focus groups in 34 case study schools. Importantly, our focus was not on the quality of the training, but on what happened within the school in the following year.

Findings

Our principal finding is that attachment and trauma awareness training in schools can lead to a profound impact on outcomes for staff and young people, provided this is supported by the wider contexts within the school and Local Authority.

In our recent survey of 112 headteachers, they reported that the changes they had made since the training had led to improvements in engagement (97%), learning (92%), attainment (79%) and attendance (72%), as well as drop in the use of sanctions including exclusion (81%). Nearly all reported that their staff were more confident in dealing with young people, while 13% felt that the training had been 'transformational' for their school:

- *"The biggest impact has been the engagement of children and their focus on learning, which hopefully will produce positive attainment results."* (Primary school)
- *"Children have certainly been more willing to engage with staff and as a consequence been attending lessons for longer periods. Staff are approaching situations differently and this has been well received by the children."* (Middle school)
- *"Improved attendance. Reduced negative behaviour incidents. Reduced fixed-term exclusions [and] no permanent exclusions. Improved GCSE outcomes for our most vulnerable learners."* (Secondary school)

Schools often use a metaphor of 'a journey' to describe what has happened since the training they received; there is an investment of time, careful planning and potentially challenges along the way. The training is not a 'quick fix', but a catalyst to making evidence-led changes within the school over a period of one to three years. These changes typically include reviews of behaviour policies, the adoption of techniques like 'emotion coaching', the creation of 'timeout' spaces, a focus on relationship building and enhanced cross-agency working (e.g. with social services).

We have identified the need for strong, visible and confident leadership within the school to make and sustain changes to policy and practice. We have also found that schools more successfully embed the changes where there is ongoing support from the Virtual School and/or Educational Psychology Service, including additional training, between-school networking, co-constructed development plans and bespoke guidance. Some Local Authorities (e.g. Islington) have an authority-wide attachment and trauma programme extending beyond schools and endorsed by senior managers and councillors.

Conclusions

There is increasingly strong evidence that attachment and trauma awareness in schools can improve inclusion and outcomes for young people who have had (or continue to have) significant negative experiences. For more information about our study, including more detailed findings and recorded webinars with headteachers, Local Authority staff and other professionals, please see our website: <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/the-alex-timpson-attachment-and-trauma-programme-in-schools>.

What can help enable all children reach their potential within mainstream education?

Report for the People Scrutiny Working Group, Bristol City Council – 30th March 2022

This submission is based on an on-going ESRC funded project: *Co-POWeR: Consortium on Practices of Wellbeing & Resilience in Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Families & Communities* (<https://co-power.leeds.ac.uk>), specifically the emerging findings from Work Package 2. We have been investigating the impact of the pandemic and racism on and what can enable resilience and well-being among children, young people and families from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. The following points connect what young people, parents and professionals have told us about support since the pandemic with enablers of inclusive mainstream education practices and policies. The following summary is based on a sub-set of our data because analysis is ongoing.

Minimising stressful environments

The pandemic heightened stress levels for everyone, but in particular for children who found that they could not cope with the sudden and ambiguous changes to educational demands. Excessive sleeping, exacerbated by the absence of a daily routine, was a common theme in our discussions with young people. As a result, young people told us about how they disengaged, either overtly or in secret, leading to feelings of guilt or anxiety. We heard of two cases where the combined drop in attainment and fear of failure meant they dropped out of college. Stress was exacerbated if schools focused only on lessons without sufficiently taking into account where tasks fitted in to a student's day or week.

A key way of managing stress comes from low arousal approaches, which are rooted in behaviour management practices for students on the autism spectrum (Studio 3, 2018). This involves "strategies that focus on the reduction of stress, fear and frustration" (Morewood, 2020). When young people are not coping, one strategy can be to decrease demands and requests. This might be a temporary adjustment to expectations but is important in recognising the extenuating circumstances that make carrying on as normal difficult. Some students noticed that education switched online and expectations remained the same, which ignored the pandemic-related problems that both staff and students were facing. Acknowledging the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health and making space for staff and students to reflect on causes of stress and how they manage it is integral to proactive responses to challenging situations.

Enabling access to support

An emerging finding from our research is the crucial role of support services outside of home and education settings, such as youth clubs and sports facilities. Enabling success in education is therefore connected to enabling environments outside the classroom. This is particularly important for students, such as Black male youth, who are disproportionately sanctioned if seen congregating in public spaces. One female Black African student explained that a teacher had told her that seeing a group of Black youth was a worry. These sorts of interactions generate a sense of alienation, exacerbating historical and contemporary hostile environments in wider society, in school. Tackling racism in school is an obvious way to enable all students to reach their potential.

One way of doing this is to acknowledging experiences of racism in everyday life across the school curriculum, throughout the year. Once off engagements during, for example, Black History Month were seen by some students as performative rather than a genuine attempt to have difficult conversations about racialised power dynamics. The sorts of things that young people found useful were weekly reading groups and guest speakers who young people could relate to. This provided a space to talk about intersectional identities and share experiences of navigating life as a person who is part of a minority group in the UK. Consequently, young people are able to build trusting relationships with staff in school which enables them to ask for help when they are struggling with issues, such as emotional health, which is highly stigmatised.

The sorts of constraints to accessing support included the following:

- A belief that they are “a lost cause” if previous support services had not helped.
- Having to explain themselves to people who do not understand the cultural and environmental constraints. For example, having to explain that coping with schoolwork is impacted by being a young Black homosexual male in a single parent, low-income household with no WIFI and caring responsibilities for younger siblings.
- An assumption that others’ needs are greater. For example, two young people did not access a laptop scheme even though their devices were not fit for purpose because they knew that other students did not have a laptop at all.

A reluctance to access support was echoed in our research with parents, who avoided services based in previous experiences of prejudice and race discrimination. It is therefore important that if support for inclusive education is not being accessed and/or not being accessed across different demographic groups, it should not be assumed that these services are not needed. Instead, support should be designed and evaluated with the intended beneficiaries. This will clarify whether it is the *type* of support or *how* support is being provided that needs to change. This will vary from school to school depending on the changing needs of their intake and catchment area. Listening to young people is therefore crucial in creating an enabling environment where all children are part of conversations about how their learning is supported.

Integrated support systems

Further to including young people in conversations about their education, our research with professionals underlined the importance of collaboration. Current systems and structures have a tendency to be siloed rather than making decisions that involve students, teachers, parents, health workers, police and social workers. One reason that integrated support is important is to avoid stereotypical assumptions about the needs of young people. Such assumptions can disproportionately impact children in South Asian families, who are assumed to have ample support networks at home and therefore have fewer needs than other students. Therefore adequate family support has a direct bearing on attainment and individual children’s capacity to achieve their potential.

Although the above ideas are not new, our research indicates that practices and policies are not being implemented consistently, which disproportionately impacts vulnerable children, young people and families.

Prof. Anna Gupta, Royal Holloway University of London on behalf of colleagues from Co-POWeR Work Package 2

- Prof. Claudia Bernard (Goldsmiths, University of London)
- Prof. Monica Lakhnypaul (University College, London)
- Dr Anita Sharma (Royal Holloway, University of London)
- Dr Teresa Peres (Royal Holloway, University of London)

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Thank you for writing and giving me the opportunity to comment. Rather than reply in detail, I think it would be best if the Group could look at this website, which summarises the findings from my most recent research into the education of Children in Need and Children in Care. Much of this is concerned directly or indirectly with the importance of an inclusive approach to mainstream education.

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/policybristol/policy-briefings/children-in-need-and-in-care-education-progress/>

The main conclusions are listed in the section towards the end on *Implications for Policy and Practice*. These include factors that would enable children to cope better with mainstream education. We didn't investigate in detail special educational needs and disabled children, apart from those with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. (You might liaise with the Council for Disabled Children if you have not already done so.)

The main considerations seem to me to be:

- Educational difficulties are identifiable when children are very young, which signals the importance of early intervention.
- Efforts to alleviate poverty will enable many children to do better at school.
- Stability in care and education are key issues. Controlling for other factors, moving children between placements and schools harms them socially and educationally. This doesn't mean to say that children can never move but it should be very exceptional and approached very carefully – facilitating transitions. Fixed-term and permanent exclusions should be avoided and are counter-productive. They might benefit the school but not the pupil and teachers need to be provided with alternative strategies for behaviour management.
- There seems to be much variation in secondary schooling in particular. Not all schools seem to be sympathetic or welcoming to pupils with difficulties. Crackdowns on behaviour (often Government-inspired) can clash with an inclusive approach.

These are findings from a national study and do not relate to Bristol specifically. I also realise that these are complex issues which have been exacerbated by cuts to local authority budgets as well as per-pupil school funding.

Regards.

David Berridge

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