

Welcome to the Barnet Cultural Education Partnership webinar on  
*'Diversifying the curriculum'*

**"BE THE CHANGE  
THAT YOU WISH  
TO SEE IN THE WORLD"**

- Mahatma Gandhi

By Elise Davis and Jessica Davies

# Who are we and why are we here?



Elise Davis

I am a youth worker and content producer at Art Against Knives. We work with young people across 6 youth-led creative projects in and around London. We focus on early intervention through creative opportunities. We currently run 3 nail bars, 2 music studios and 1 MMA group in Barnet that young people the ages of 11-25 attend.



Jessica Davies - MAC-UK's Trusted Relationships Project

MAC-UK is a mental health charity which develops projects across London for young people, with young people. Co-production is a central principle of our work, as well as trying to change the systems around young people which don't often cater to their needs.

We are using this space today to open discussions on this topic and to find out what has already been done, what is yet to be done and what happens next. We would now like to get to know who you are!

# Trusted Relationships Project



The Trusted Relationships Project is a partnership between community organisations and Barnet Council.

Trusted relationships between professionals and young people are at the heart of reducing risk of exploitation.

AAK and MAC-UK focus on elevating youth voices into spaces they might not usually be heard, in order to make changes which suit the needs of young people.

MAC-UK use psychologically informed principles to support the work of AAK practitioners who are doing direct work with young people, and to generate ideas for change within Barnet Children's Services.

# Who are you? What made you come to this webinar today?

Opening round -

Introduce yourself

Where are you coming from?

What made you come to this webinar today?



# Decolonising the curriculum- what has already been done and how?

Since the tragic passing of George Floyd earlier this year and the Black Lives Matter movement an ex-student of Queen Elizabeth's Girls School decided to write a letter to encourage and suggest ways the school could decolonize their curriculum. A friend of mine who was inspired by this movement also wrote a letter to her previous school East Barnet which is also where I attended and this letter gained over 500 supporting signatures from previous students as well as current.

I decided to bring this letter to Art Against Knives as I knew we could help to push this letter and bring it to many external professionals like yourselves. Surprisingly, we had a very fast response from East Barnet which was amazing. We wanted to share this topic with you to gather your thoughts and experiences as professionals in relation to this matter.



# BLM Letter

education in the mistakes of our past. There must be acknowledgment of the reality of colonialism and slavery. An honest portrayal of the British colonial empire is a positive start. However, the reforms of the curriculum can extend beyond history. For example, English Literature can similarly be changed to reflect the far-reaching influence of Black British and post-colonial literature in the UK today. Whilst we recognise the value of what are considered "canonical" texts on the curriculum, a decolonisation of literature with the introduction of writers such as Bernardine Evaristo, Reni Eddo-Lodge, Jackie Kay, Hanif Kureishi, Nikesh Shukla and Akala to name a few, will help celebrate alternative perspectives of home, belonging and identity. These changes aim to encourage students to engage in informed conversations about race within society, which are essential in dismantling inherent harmful systemic ideologies. The diversity can be extended to other subjects as well and we hope that you will join with us to demand the Department of Education reform the national curriculum in the following ways:

First and foremost, though we are aware it is not currently compulsory in the UK, we feel it is imperative that students be educated on British Colonialism, with particular focus on the slave trade and the many other subsequent atrocities which Britain played a significant role in throughout its history and in recent times. These include, but are not limited to; The Windrush Scandal, the 1919 racist attacks on people of colour in multiple major British cities and even the numerous openly racist British laws such as the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order 1925 or the British Nationality Act 1981. In the [curriculum policy](#) found on the school website, it highlights the importance of having "broad" and "balanced" learning which is "relevant for the 21st century". In order to abide by these statements, we believe that educating students efficiently on these significant historical events that [lead up](#) to the current social injustices and educating students on the acceptance of others, there must be in-depth education into British history and all aspects of this.

The history education provided is predominantly white and Eurocentric, leaving many ignorant of the racism and injustices that Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) faced back then and consequently, continue to face today.

[Impact of Omission's survey](#), released on the 1st June 2020, emphasised the scale of this issue, [finding that](#):

- 86.2% were educated on the Tudors in-depth as part of their curriculum, whereas only 9.3% learned about the role of slavery in British Industrialisation;
- 72.2% learned about The Great Fire of London, whereas only 7% learned about Britain's colonisation of Africa; and
- 71.5% were taught about the Battle of Hastings, whereas only 5.2% learned about the role of BAME soldiers in WW1 and II.

In addition, it was found that when asked: "**The national curriculum for history aims to ensure that all pupils: 'gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation'". During discussions of the British Empire in school, to what extent was the role of slavery discussed?"**

- 5.5% replied 'to a significant extent';
- 33% replied 'to a limited extent';
- 34.9% replied 'It was mentioned briefly'; and
- 26.6% replied 'not at all'.

There has been a huge lack of education on the topics spoken about above, which could be used as an opportunity to teach students about how historical events within this period established and perpetuated systemic racism still forms the basis of modern society, rather than solely focusing on Britain's achievements during this period.

[The Black Curriculum](#) produces a wide variety of resources and suggestions on how to provide a more rounded curriculum. This is a social enterprise founded in 2019 to address the lack of Black British history in the UK curriculum, delivers arts focused Black history programmes and

Here you can see the letter we sent to East Barnet School that gained 507 supporting signatures. We firstly addressed that fact that we know it's not compulsory in the UK to decolonise the British Curriculum. We then looked at the schools current curriculum policy and suggested ways in which they could stand by their policies and statements such as "having the importance of broad and balanced learning which is relevant to the 21st century", they could stand by this by doing many of the following.

Statistics from the impact of omissions survey suggested that most young people within education were educated on Tudors, The great London fire and the battle of Hastings whereas a small number of people learnt about Britain's colonisation of Africa and the role of BAME soldiers in WW1 and II.

From this we suggested that the school looked at organisations such as 'The Black Curriculum' to come and educate young people within workshops .

We also decided to give the school some ideas on how they can implement BLM into subjects such as; history, english, RE, music, art, economics, geography and more.

- **History** should touch not only on the [UK's achievements](#), but also, for example, the realities of colonialism and slavery at the hands of our ancestors. International history should also be taught to bring perspectives from other countries into the curriculum, aiming where possible to ensure that each continent is given a voice in the curriculum.
- **English** set texts need to include literature from both white and BIPOC authors, and ensure this balance is reflected in the literature available in the school library.
- **Religious Education** in the past has largely focused on the consistent and repetitive teaching of Christianity but should move to acknowledge the growing multiculturalism of the UK and prioritise the equal teaching of at least the six largest religions as well as alternative spiritual faiths and approaches where possible.
- **Music, Art and Technology** needs to appreciate the cultural influence BIPOC artists have had throughout history, reflecting this through the artists and works studied rather than appropriating their ideas. This should be used to empower students and demonstrate how individuals have used their medium to amplify their voices.
- **Economics** should include an assessment of how colonisation laid the foundations for the UK's economic model and shaped ideas of modern commerce; and
- **Geography** needs to ensure it addresses the pitfalls of globalisation, neo-colonialism, trade and migration for BIPOC citizens.

The education we receive in schools' shapes how we see the world and how we treat others. Schools have an unbelievable responsibility to educate and provide open dialogues. Providing a more rounded curriculum will allow for more acceptance and equality in all aspects of school life. By making changes, the school will be recognising the vital current social issues and pledging a deeper educational commitment to students.

# Outcomes

Since sending the letter to East Barnet School they have ensured that the Black Lives Matter movement became a regular agenda at the senior leadership team meetings and they agreed to two main actions being:

1. To set up a working party where the Pastoral Associate Deputy Headteacher would lead on it to gather opinions, views and experiences of students, parents and teachers on this matter. They will evaluate current practice and they'll look at modifying policies and procedures.
2. They will review the curriculum to ensure that it is decolonised. East Barnet School newsletter to speak on the BLM Movement.

- > Influencing parents/carers to educate their children on racism
- > EBS collaborating with primary schools to educate young people on racism
- > Black history implemented throughout the whole of the curriculum
- > Buddying system (older black students support younger students with similar experiences)
- > Open to workshops coming in to talk to students such as 'The Black Curriculum'
- > Ex-students can come in to talk to students



# As a young person why do you think diversifying the curriculum is important?

- ▶ A young person from London gave us her thoughts on why it's important to her to diversify the curriculum.

“ For me, the history that we were taught purposefully gives us half the story and erases the accomplishments and contributions of all non white individuals in order to push the harmful narrative that whiteness equals to success. However, this couldn't be further from the truth. It's important to me that we learn about the richness of our heritage, the trials and tribulations that black people had to experience in the face of so much oppression, and how despite that, they still managed to achieve just as much as the white man. I also believe that through greater representation in our curriculum we can empower the young people of this generation to continue the work that generations before them established, and to aim to create the world as it should be. Change is often catalysed through the mobilisation of youth and now is the time to demand reform to our education system so that it teaches us the true events of past and the full nature of humanity which has helped to form our society today”.

# Discussions (break out rooms 3 groups - 10 minutes and feedback)

- ▶ What are you or your team already doing to support the influence of this change?
- ▶ What else could be done?
- ▶ Why do you think it's important to diversify the curriculum ?



# Thank you for taking part in this webinar !

▶ Name one thing you are going to take away from this session?