



NSG People

OUR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY
AT NORTHAMPTON SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

AUTUMN 2020

Respect for self - Respect for others - Respect for learning

A platform for NSG People

These pages represent our community as education professionals working at Northampton School for Girls.

The words on these pages are our own and represent the issues that we want to share with each other.

Anyone of us is welcome to suggest themes or content for these newsletters which will be published once per term.

Most items provide links to further reading and/or social media to continue the discussion. We'd like to build the NSG community online - please consider joining in:



@NSGalerts @NSG_Hub @nsg_pe
@NSGPeople @NSGSixthForm



@NorthamptonSchoolForGirls



@Northampton_School_For_Girls

Anti-Racism in education

Siobhan Cox, Teacher of Sociology, explores this vital issue in relation to education

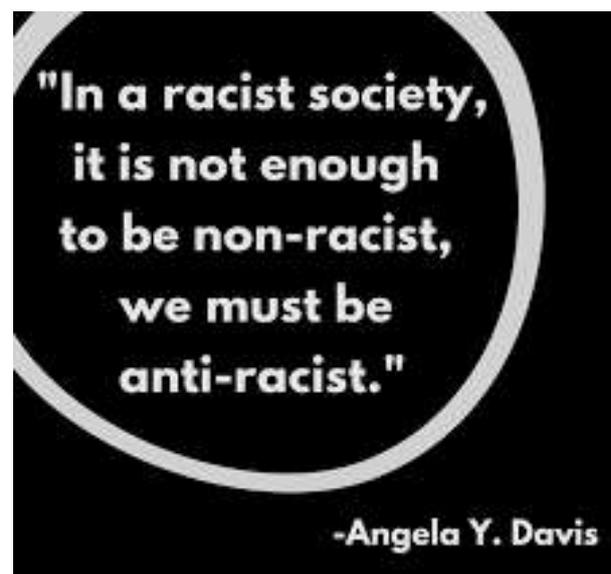
Footage of the brutal murder of George Floyd, shared globally through social media platforms has intensified the urgency of essential action to eliminate racism where it exists in society and its institutions. This includes the racism which exists in the education system and our schools. Examining individual and institutional racism is a significant part of the academic study of society. Both studying and teaching sociology has informed my own understanding of the insidious bias and inequality which exists within British society determining life chances on the basis of ethnicity and race. To eliminate the impact of discrimination on our students now, and in the future, it is essential that those who work in schools acknowledge this racism and act to eradicate it. This necessitates within staff a commitment to anti-racist practice, and proactive steps against the oppression of marginalised groups of students in our schools and classrooms.

Personal prejudice on the basis of race remains a pervasive issue in the UK, with a [2017 survey by NatCen](#) (National Centre for Social Research) highlighting that one in our respondents said they are “very” or “a little” prejudiced towards people of other races. This self-report survey is likely to underestimate the real extent of racial prejudice and in turn potential racial discrimination, due to the respondents’ awareness of the ‘right answer’ in this context; the social desirability of commitments to equality. Our recent work as teachers to calculate GCSE and A level grades may have made many of us aware of [the unconscious bias](#) which we often hold about our pupils and meant that we scrutinised any prejudiced

views and assumptions related to race, class and disability to eliminate discrimination in the way we calculated grades, although the [Ofqual algorithm was not similarly reflexive](#).

However, these issues of ‘unconscious bias’ are widespread and longstanding.

Decade old research into the relative outcomes of minority ethnic pupils in different systems of SATs testing showed that black pupils are [‘routinely marked down by teachers’](#) and fared much better when assessed using anonymised tests. Furthermore, those from white ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be teachers, with 85.9% of teachers and 92.9% of headteachers employed in state-funded schools in 2018 being white, while [75% of their pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds](#). A logical consequence of these statistics would be that a significant proportion of those who work in schools will hold personal prejudice on the basis of race, and indeed due to the hierarchy of the classroom and school structure, teachers are frequently in a position to exercise these prejudices affecting the treatment of students, and indeed other staff.



Respect for self - Respect for others - Respect for learning

Since the 1970s the British sociology of education has developed a strong research tradition into the issue of teacher racism with a range of studies suggesting that a significant proportion of minority ethnic students experience direct discrimination in the classroom and wider school community. Research by Britain's 'most influential race theorist in education' David Gillborn concluded that teachers hold 'racialised expectations' of their pupils, these are stereotyped assumptions of the behaviour, effort and attainment that teachers expect from students on the basis of their race. Gillborn found that teachers' expectations were especially negative for black pupils, with teachers holding systematically lower academic expectations and a heightened anticipation that their black pupils will present behaviour problems in the classroom.

Gillborn argued that teachers acted on these misinterpretations, leading to greater conflict between black students and teachers, and contributing to not only worse academic outcomes but also higher rates of exclusions for black students. Indeed the most recent data highlights that Black, and Mixed Black and White groups of pupils are still more likely to be temporarily excluded; and that Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils are three times more likely to be permanently excluded from school. Permanent exclusion has a devastating impact on life chances with only 1% of those excluded from school achieving five good GCSEs; those excluded by age 12 being four times more likely to be imprisoned as an adult; and research from Crisis showing that children who have been excluded from school are 90 times more likely to be living on the streets. If teachers' do hold "racialised expectations" as Gillborn's research suggests, it is essential that they are rooted out to stop discrimination decimating life chances.



This is not to suggest that the overwhelming majority of teachers would ever be intentionally racist. Many sociologists highlight that teacher racism is often unconscious and unintended, with research by Cecile Wright emphasizing that many teachers who espouse (what they believe to be) a genuine commitment to racial equality also negatively label and stereotype their black and Asian students. Wright highlights key issues affecting Asian students, in particular Asian girls who she found to be isolated in the classroom by their teachers' assumptions of poor English, mispronunciation and misattribution of names, insensitivity and misunderstanding of cultural and religious beliefs, and assumptions that students would not be allowed to travel away from home for educational visits, or indeed for further study. A caveat is that Wright's research is nearly thirty years old, however students continue to attested that these 'daily humiliations' have been their experience in British schools.

A key problem then within British schools and wider institutions seems to be the existence of an unwitting 'colour blind' racism amongst staff. Most teachers are committed to equality but can act in ways which counter this, and don't act against discrimination when necessary. Those who are 'colour blind' claim they 'don't see race' and that they would never act in a way that is racist, however Heidi Safia Mirza suggested that 'colour blind' racism was one of the most widespread typifications of racism within the schools and amongst the teachers she researched. Mirza argued that 'colour blind' teachers denied the relevance of their pupils' experiences of racial discrimination, and did not proactively tackle racism when it occurred in their lessons. Some sociologists have gone further to criticise 'colour blindness' as an ideology, arguing that its purpose is to obscure and detract from the very real racial inequalities and discriminations which exist in interactions and wider society.



Research suggests that individual racism takes root in a wider system of institutional and structural racism in British society. Indeed, the existence of institutional racism has been publicly acknowledged by the UK government since the 1999 Macpherson report. For Gillborn, institutional racism is a form of racial discrimination which is 'locked in' to the systems of British society, becoming an entrenched feature of the way that they work.

Institutional racism therefore perpetuates itself through socialisation, teaching that 'white privilege' and dominance is the normal way of being in society today. A key issue related to institutional racism in education is the narrow and ethnocentric nature of the curriculum taught in our classrooms. The overwhelming majority of the history, literature, art, science, music (and sociology!) covered by our syllabuses present white contributions as of significant import and relevance to the detriment of a wider appreciation and acknowledgement of non-white groups and their experience(s). Critics suggest that this means our curriculum teaches that whiteness is associated with intellectual and cultural superiority. However, the government has decided that a review of this curriculum is not necessary despite the inevitable impact this will have on non-white students.

So then, what can we do? It seems obvious to encourage everyone to try to make conscious any unconscious bias they hold. This means that we should question if the race or ethnicity of a student affects our relationship with them, expectations of them and actions towards them. We should modify those things accordingly. I would argue that we should not be 'colour blind' in our practice because the world is not. Our students could experience discrimination in latent and manifest ways, we should not deny their identity as a person of colour as unintentionally we may deny the validity of those experiences.

Finally, we should promote a wider non-white curriculum where possible. We are not able to reform the exam syllabuses provided to us, but we can change the topics we choose to cover and how we teach about the intellectual, moral, cultural and artistic contributions of non-white groups to build esteem, empathy and action amongst all of our students.

**“If you see something that is not right, not fair, not just,
you have a moral obligation to do something about it.”**

Senator John Robert Lewis (21 Feb 1940 - 17 July 2020)



Links to further information

NSG internal resources

[Black History Month](#)

[Equality & Diversity blog](#)

Coming Soon

NSG Charter for Action

Twitter / Online

[@BAMEednetwork / bameednetwork.com](#)

[White Privilege: Unpacking the
Invisible Knapsack, Peggy McIntosh](#)

[Race and Racism in English Secondary
Schools, Dr Remi Joseph-Salisbury](#)



wellbeing

Lockdown Story: Blue Lagoon

"I would look up in the sky and I've never seen clouds look like they did, they were like balls of cotton wool. Everything was so fresh. And I thought that this has happened for a reason. To wake us all up and make us realise that we need to start appreciating what we have."

Tina Duggan, LSA Carer

In late spring 2020, while teachers were adapting to the switch to remote lessons, the team of Learning Support Assistants, who usually support students in those same lessons, were re-evaluating what they could achieve remotely.

Working from home, while continuing to support SEND students, the LSAs accessed a raft of online courses on subjects including SEND teaching methods, safeguarding, and supporting students' mental health. Janice Tyne, SENDCo, has seen up close the benefits of the lockdown time for the LSA team: ***"If you want a team to grow, then you must give them the opportunity and space to learn by themselves. And for them to see that what they are doing is not just for the sake of it, that it can be used elsewhere. Most people want to do that and grow within their job in some way. It was nice to see how many of them were able to do that. [Lockdown] was an unrivalled CPD opportunity for them."***

Each LSA was tasked with a project. They researched, created a PowerPoint, and presented it back to the team. Topics such as 'What makes an effective LSA' and 'How to build successful relationships with parents' were chosen as being most relevant and useful. For some LSAs, like Tina Duggan, this was the first time they had worked with PowerPoint and given a presentation. ***"I'd never stood in front of people and given a presentation, but I did it to a small group. It makes you feel valued and we all learned from each other's projects."***

The results were positive on many levels; the team grew closer from daily check-ins on Google Classroom and twice weekly Google Meets. Once school reopened in June, Wednesdays were used for team meetings and the presentation of each person's research project to the rest of the team. ***"I see a difference in the LSAs, I think they feel they've grown through doing this."*** Janice has seen the LSAs growing in confidence in using IT and in their knowledge of their role and the needs of SEND students.

During this time Tina has reflected on how the LSA team work together and she aspires to help the team naturally fall into positive thinking and being open, so that they better understand each other and work even better as a team. ***"It's not just about the individual, it is about all of us, and how the students are going to feel when they return [to school]. We need to put our own feelings aside. The students are the most important thing to focus on. We're all human and sometimes come into work feeling a bit down but, for the students' sake, I've learned that we always have to demonstrate positivity, even if we're not feeling it ourselves, so that the students are reassured. We have to keep that balance for them and be aware of the knock-on effect we can have on their day."***

"I have this sense that I have achieved something good and I want to continue to do that."

Further reading: [How TAs were the hidden heroes of lockdown](#)

DfE on wellbeing

The DfE plans to launch a wellbeing charter for school and college staff. They have accepted the recommendations of an expert advisory group and have committed to integrate and embed staff wellbeing into relevant training, communications, and regular research and analysis.

Schools Minister Nick Gibb said, in June this year, "I know that staff in schools are working selflessly and flexibly, going above and beyond to help their students. This is why we are supporting leaders so that they are able to fulfil their duty of care to their staff, building on the excellent practice that exists in the sector."

The DfE have committed to launching the charter, which will be voluntary, later in 2020.

Switch off at the weekend

So have you picked up on the suggestion of **not sending work emails outside of 7.00am - 7.00pm or at the weekends?** It has been mentioned in school a few times, most recently during the September training days.

The importance of switching off from work and the associated **weekend recovery** has been correlated with:

- weekly job performance
- personal initiative
- psychological detachment during off-work time
- reduced emotional exhaustion caused by high job demands
- employee engagement levels

So the next time you are tempted to send an email out of hours, check yourself and consider stepping away from the keyboard, for your own wellbeing.

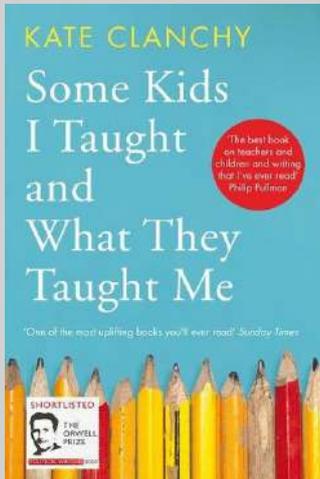
In consideration of your colleagues, if you need to send an email, please schedule it to be sent within working time (it's the small arrow at the side of the send button).

What do you make of the idea? Will it help with your wellbeing? Will it change your attitude and approach to work? **Join the #digitalbalance conversation on Twitter with @NSGPeople**

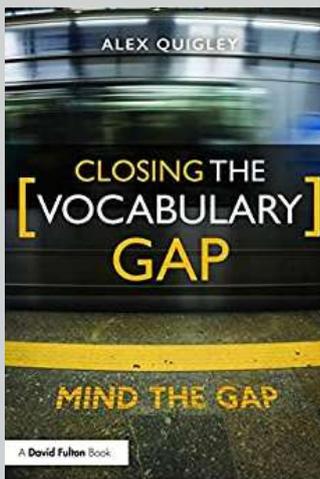
Further reading: *At the Crossroads: The need for a digital rebalance* by Wellbeing Pulse and the bank workers' charity.

Books

Sophie Child, Teacher of English, showcases some of the books available for staff to borrow from the Muriel Clarke Library



Why did you choose to work in education? Was it a love of your subject? Did it stem from your own experiences at school? Are you just passionate about helping children achieve through learning? ***Some Kids I Taught and What They Taught Me*** is an incredible book that explores exactly that. Through her 30 year career, teacher and writer Kate Clanchy discusses some of the incredible students she's met and how they've influenced not only her teaching, but also her life. This book will have you feeling the full spectrum of emotions as it explores children, schools, teachers, race, and class within the education system. **You can follow her on Twitter @KateClanchy!**



It is a heartbreaking fact that 1 in 8 children do not have access to books at home. Not only is it heartbreaking, but it has a detrimental impact on the academic and life chances of those children. In ***Closing the Vocabulary Gap***, Alex Quigley explores how it is every teacher's responsibility to make the students in our classrooms 'word richer' therefore vastly improving their life chances and social mobility. He offers tried and tested practical strategies about how to close the vocabulary gap.

Quigley also blogs about the topic here:

<https://www.theconfidentteacher.com/>

You can follow him on Twitter @HuntingEnglish



If these reviews inspire you, or if you have your own CPD book to recommend, share it on Twitter with @NSGPeople and let's start important conversations about our work.



A warm welcome to our new NSG People



Katy Bellingham
DT



Jade Stubbs
DT



Laura Vann-Hopewell
Science



Karolyn Claypole
Textiles



Claire Green
Sixth Form



Jayne Morris
Dance/Drama/PE



Quality Ntefon
SEND



Jenn King
Science



Vicky Wragg
Maths



Will Finnie
Science