

2024

**BRIG**

**Birmingham Race Impact Group  
Global Position Paper  
Education**

# Position Paper: Education for a superdiverse city

## Introduction

Education in Birmingham has had a mixed history. Its reputation has brought it national recognition on many occasions. Those of us close to the ground also have 'insider' insights and perspectives which are usually not known to the folk further afield.

This position paper sets out to record the past and the present before suggesting a particular future.

## Past - Sankofa: We've been here before

Sankofa', means looking back to move forward. The 'Sankofa' is a saying or proverb used by the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa.

*"Se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenkyi" / "It's not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten"*

It represents the importance of retaining or remembering knowledge from one's past whilst still moving forward. Recognising the many years of black struggle, we now stand on the shoulders of giants and are humbled by their campaigns, achievements and how they championed change for a fairer society, where everyone's potential is allowed to thrive and be realised.

**1938** Indian Workers' Association set up in Coventry

**1948** The Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury and sporadic anti-immigrant protests were taking place in Birmingham.

**1950s** The Birmingham Immigration Control Association was active locally as well as influencing nationally which led to the first racist legislation; the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962.

**1960s** 'Teaching English to Immigrants': Birmingham was one of the first authorities to set up specific service for the newly arriving immigrant children and adults. A department for the teaching of English as a Second Language was set up in 1960.

By 1968 there were 52 fulltime and some parttime peripatetic teachers teaching some 2000 children in withdrawal classes, with another 250 children in language centres. The Association of Teachers or English to Pupils from Overseas was established in the West Midlands.

**1965** Birmingham MP, Dennis Howell, advises the government on its policy of 'bussing' of ethnic minority children. The policy was adopted by Bradford, Southall and a few others. To the dismay of Howell, Birmingham decided not to adopt the policy because of expected opposition from "English parents in the reception areas"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R.: Birmingham 1939-1970, p383. .

**1966** Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation established.

**1960s** Sir Tim Brighouse (Chief Education Officer 1993–2002) brought to our attention the following advert<sup>2</sup> for teacher recruitment, the final draft of which read as follows:

Birmingham children are white and they're black  
Immigrants come, we can't send them back  
Really we'd like to but now they're here  
Millions who multiply year after year  
It's our job to teach them to live just like us  
Nicely and soberly without any fuss  
God knows how we'll do it, we'd all like to try  
Have you the desire to give help and to try  
And teach in our schools – we'll see you get paid  
May we please employ you to give us your aid<sup>3</sup>

**1971** *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System - Bernard Coard*. Coard's book exposed the discrimination faced by Black students, and the institutional racism of the UK education system.

**1978** Muslim Education Consultative Committee established. Later it worked with Education to produce guidance on educational needs of Muslim children.

**1980s** City of Birmingham District Council: Education for our Multicultural Society: a Policy Statement.

As part of its wider policy for the creation of a just and equal society, Birmingham District Council requires all its educational institutions and services to establish, maintain and promote racial equality and justice.

All schools and colleges, therefore, are required to implement the three aims:

1. To be aware of and to counter racism and the discriminatory practices to which it gives rise.
2. To be aware of and to provide for the particular needs of pupils having regard for their racial, ethnic, cultural, historical, linguistic and religious backgrounds.
3. To prepare *all* (original emphasis) pupils for life in our multicultural society, and build upon the strengths of cultural diversity.

In order to achieve these antiracist multicultural aims, all personnel in educational institutions and services:-

1. Understand the principles and practices of racial equality and justice and implement them.
2. Identify and eradicate all discriminatory practices, procedures and customs and replace with practices, procedures and customs which are fair to all.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/hope-has-be-new-black> accessed 27.5.2022.

<sup>3</sup> Grosvenor, I. 1997. *Assimilating Identities*. Lawrence and Wishart.

3. Empathise with the needs, aspirations and demands of the black and minority ethnic communities and respond sensitively to them.
4. Encourage black representation and participation in all decision-making processes.
5. Encourage the recruitment and promotion of black and minority ethnic personnel at all staffing levels.
6. Encourage the appointment of black and minority ethnic governors and managers.
7. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy and make changes as appropriate.

This policy is antiracist in that it attempts to tackle the racist assumptions, omissions and practices that underly much of what we do in the education system. It is multicultural in that it takes account of, and incorporates into educational procedures, practices and content a respect for the various cultures that make up our city and society. Further details on this are to be found on the BRIG website.

**1980s** The Rampton Report – West Indian Children in our schools. This then became The Swann Report – Education for All.

**1980s** Multicultural Support Service set up with units such as English as a Second Language, African Caribbean Development Unit, Multicultural Development Unit. 1983: The journal Multicultural Review was produced and circulated to all schools. The resource Recognising Racism slide-set was produced as was Race Relations Teaching Pack produced by AFFOR (All faiths for one race), with cassette on Racism by Ranjit Sondhi at the Asian Resources centre.

**1986** “In 1986, Birmingham City Council, a major West Midlands employer, with 50,000 full and part-time workers, decided as part of its positive action programme, that its aim would be to recruit 20% of new staff from ethnic minority communities” (Employment Report, Commission for Racial Equality, 1987). In launching the programme Councillor Bill Gray said:

*“What we are saying is that from now on, regardless of other considerations, 20 per cent of recruiting must come from ethnic minorities. We are going to monitor recruitment and managers will have to explain if they have not recruited 20 per cent. It is no good just talking of being committed to an equal opportunities process- we have to demonstrate that we mean what we say.”* Bill Gray

**1988** Birmingham Education and Muslim Liaison Committee collaboration: Guidelines on meeting the religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils (English and Urdu). Revised 1999.

**1995** John Solomos and Les Back, in their book about the City (Race, Politics and Social Change, 1995), pointed out that Birmingham has been very successful with regard to writing policies and presenting an image of itself as an authority that is in the forefront of developing race equality policies. However, it has not been as good at making sure that race equality initiatives are embraced at all levels within the organisation. The authors quote a Black officer saying: “We have created a façade that race relations have been strengthened.

We go all around Europe, host conferences blowing Birmingham's trumpet but the reality of the situation is very different..." (p191).

But, it would appear that it is not all window-dressing. There is much good practice from the past that we can learn from. I thought this Birmingham political leader, quoted in Solomos and Back, summed up my thinking on positive action:

*"..If you have a history of under-representation you've got to do something at some point to catch up, but I am against the dropping of standards. I think what you've got to do is remove any other and illegitimate obstacles, personal racism of a superior within a department or something of that sort, overt discrimination. Remove that so that people can compete fairly. What I wouldn't do is remove competition."*

*"It is very well making policy pronouncements, but you have to take it much further than this. It is just not enough to have fine pieces of paper... In employment, for example, you need to take a whole view.... If you recruit ten black people and ten years later they are in the same position, that's not equality"* Black Officer

As a policy response, we could do worse than refer to the 1984 manifesto commitment of Birmingham Labour Party. As pointed out in Solomos and Back, it committed the incoming administration to seek to achieve "proportionate employment of ethnic minorities.. at all levels." It committed the Council to take Positive Action to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for ethnic minorities in all its initiatives. As a result, the City Council successfully pursued a target of twenty per cent ethnic minority employees, under the leadership of Bill Gray who is quoted above.

Following this, there was writing of equal opportunities criteria into the performance contracts of senior managers. The Chief Officers of service departments made regular reports to the Personnel and Equal opportunities Committee (though this resulted in some "embarrassed and heated exchanges with members, it worked"). The "situation had been transformed radically." By 1993, the ethnic minority presence in the City's workforce had reached 15.4%, with a "number of departments approaching the target 20 per cent minority employment and some have completely transformed their ethnic composition."

**2001** Challenges for the future – race equality in Birmingham: Report of the Birmingham Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Commission.

*"The institutions should take steps to ensure that they address the current under-representation of minority ethnic people in their employment. All institutions should establish workforce targets based on the current minority ethnic population of the city...You can performance manage so many things, why can't you performance manage race?"*

*"If public services are to be effective in responding to more diverse needs, then a pre-requisite is to ensure that their workforce profiles are truly reflective of (the) diversity."*

- The Education Department must develop an action plan to engage parents from minority ethnic communities in 'school-plus' activities.
- Consideration of fixed term and permanent exclusions should be part of the agenda for the Education Department's termly partnership monitoring of schools.
- Special inspections should be commissioned of the schools that have disproportionate levels of exclusion or truancy among minority ethnic groups and particularly the groups at risk.
- The Education Department should set and monitor targets for recruiting, training, retaining and promoting minority ethnic origin teachers in all schools.
- Education Department should monitor and review strategies for recruiting and retaining minority ethnic origin school governors in all schools.
- The Education Department should ensure implementation of the CRE Standards and undertake a review of education services to ensure race equality policies are integral to an embedded within the business planning process in the Education Department itself and within individual schools' action plans.

**2003** Race Equality and Education in Birmingham – commissioned Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Race Action Partnership – Dr Simon Warren & Professor David Gillborn

- Birmingham has been identified nationally as a leading authority in the field of race equality: consequently, our findings (on the progress that has been made and the problems that persist) have significance beyond the city itself.
- School improvement and effectiveness does not necessarily embody a meaningful concern with race equality. Research elsewhere (and Birmingham's own recent statistics) suggest that pursuing 'effectiveness' without a conscious and explicit focus on race equality will not narrow the 'equality gap'.
- One way ahead would be to appoint a named officer with responsibility for co-ordinating all race equality work in the LEA.
- There is a key role for organisations such as BRAP in helping to bridge the gulf between the professionals and the people whose children experience the education system and have to live with its failure.
- One of the lessons to emerge from this review is that talk of 'good practice' does not always reflect evidence. There is a clear need for targeted work on race equality; systematic evaluation to identify what works and co-ordinated dissemination and support strategies to spread the impacts widely.
- Recruitment policies in schools need to better reflect the population profiles of the city.
- Parents want a more culturally relevant and sensitive curriculum.

In his book: 'Coincidence or conspiracy' (2008) Professor Gillborn writes: *Unless a policy is consciously designed to challenge race inequalities, it is likely to reinforce those inequalities* (p244).

**2003** Two documents were produced on underachievement<sup>4</sup> as Birmingham Education Service's plan to tackle the underachievement of African Caribbean and Asian young people in the city.

What is underachievement? Underachievement was once regarded as a product of the individual learning and her/his circumstances.

Now, however, underachievement tends to be regarded as a systematic phenomenon, which results from the relative ineffectiveness of the education system in helping certain individuals and groups to make appropriate progress.

Three ways of understanding underachievement:

- The group basis: Underachievement is sometimes seen in relation to identified groups of pupils who experience multiple disadvantage. These are identifiable groups whose levels of attainment tend to be lower than those of other groups, apparently for no reason other than their group characteristics and the inadequacy of the education system in responding to their needs.
- The area basis: The approach that sees underachievement as related to area factors is similar. Factors related to disadvantage tend to concentrate in particular geographical areas, such as inner cities areas or social housing estates, and that these factors tend to compound one another.
- The systemic basis: If underachievement is seen as the result of weaknesses in the education system than the result of characteristics of particular learners, it can be regarded as a systemic phenomenon.

What can the LEA do to combat underachievement? The analysis suggests a multi-dimensional policy response:

- Strategies at the group, the area and the systemic level rather than at one or other
- Operation of these strategies in a way that responds to individual difference, avoids a 'blanket' approach and targets resources precisely: inverse proportionality
- Positive strategies for fostering 'resilience' rather than responding only to disadvantages which African Caribbean young people experience.

Birmingham Education Service can play a part in combating African Caribbean and Asian underachievement across three broad areas:

- Work with schools
- The provision of services to underachieving groups
- Strategic leadership and management

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<sup>4</sup> African Caribbean achievement action plan: 19 December 2003. (Also Asian achievement action plan: 19 December 2003.)

**2003** Ofsted Visit to Birmingham schools – Thematic Inspection on Combating Racism 23 October

We welcomed the continued work on the collation and analysis of data on race related incidents....

Overall, data analysis was very good and there was effective tracking of attainment and measuring achievement of pupils by minority ethnic groups. Those data were then used to determine areas for action, followed by proportionate targeting of resources.

The schools we visited demonstrated low tolerance of racism – there was strong leadership from headteachers and senior management teams.

**2004** Birmingham Local Authority published (revised) Together we can stop bullying – guidance for schools and other education services on challenging bullying and racial harassment.

**2005** Effective Leadership in Multi-Ethnic Schools: National College of School Leadership<sup>5</sup>

Successful school leadership in multi-ethnic schools is based on the articulation and implementation of explicit values that promote an agenda of equality, fairness and respect.

School leaders in multi-ethnic schools project their leadership beyond the school and into the wider community. School leaders are well known in their communities and respected for the way in which they work with community representatives and respond to community needs.

... with significant resources being devoted to ensuring that parents and the wider community were encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school.

**Priorities**

The headteachers' most visible priorities are introduced below:

1. Demanding that the values of professional and other staff cohere with principles of social justice and equality.
2. Demanding that professional and other staff demonstrate a willingness to understand the cultures and background realities of their students and school community.
3. Attempting to recruit and retain staff with similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds to those existent in the school community.
4. Locating the school firmly within the immediate and broader societal context.
5. Promoting the importance of improving high-quality learning and teaching as a way of addressing disadvantage.

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<sup>5</sup>[http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/id/eprint/1853/1/Effective\\_leadership\\_in\\_multi\\_ethnic\\_schools.pdf](http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/id/eprint/1853/1/Effective_leadership_in_multi_ethnic_schools.pdf) Accessed 1.6.2022



## 6. Consciously constructing and nurturing an inclusive school culture.

**2005** Ofsted Race equality in education. Good practice in schools and local education authorities<sup>6</sup>. The survey encountered effective measures involving the use of attainment data to measure gaps and stimulate intervention. The practices incorporated fine pupil- and group-level analysis, with senior managers leading that analysis and target setting. This led to interventions that produced improvements, including involvement with parents to discuss opportunities and barriers to attainment, and to increase their children's involvement with school.

In examining the use of race equality concepts in teaching and the curriculum, inspectors found the most effective work to be where the material was coherently incorporated into lessons, through, for example, anchoring the lesson in a local historical context, or stimulating creative and purposeful writing.

All the schools visited handled and reported race-related incidents. There were examples of extensive, thoughtful and supportive LEA guidance that greatly assisted schools in approaching what is, for many schools, a sensitive and challenging area. Schools were most confident about tackling racism and race-related incidents where there was a clear lead from the senior management team on the unacceptability of such behaviour, which was plainly transmitted to staff, pupils and parents: pupils and staff in these schools particularly valued this approach.

Schools and LEAs undertook work to improve links with minority ethnic groups in order to strengthen the local community's involvement with education, and to address gaps in performance between groups of pupils. Outreach work between local communities and schools was found to be often driven by identified local needs, and encompasses, most commonly, work with parents to enable them to support their children's learning, and sometimes to enhance the parents' employment prospects. Effective work by local communities with schools results in improved attainment and behaviour and a greater sense of the community's obligations towards the school.

Recommendations included:

- that inclusion of race equality concepts in lessons should be seen as a normal part of effective teaching and learning
- that guidance on dealing with race-related incidents should be revised regularly by LEAs, taking account of local stakeholders' views, such as the police, headteachers and representative local minority ethnic groups, to reflect better local circumstances and new challenges

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<sup>6</sup>[https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5546/1/Race%20equality%20in%20education%20good%20practice%20in%20schools%20and%20local%20education%20authorities%20\(PDF%20format\).pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5546/1/Race%20equality%20in%20education%20good%20practice%20in%20schools%20and%20local%20education%20authorities%20(PDF%20format).pdf)

Accessed 1.6.2022

- as part of the review of race equality policies, schools should conduct an audit of training needs of all staff, to determine the form, nature and appropriateness of any future training; and such training should then be provided or secured by the school or LEA.

**2011** The winding up of much of Birmingham Advisory and Support Service, especially its ethnic minority staff with the expertise on multicultural/antiracist education.

**2013** Trojan Horse affair which resulted from an anonymous letter pointing to a Muslim conspiracy of takeover of the schools. The press and politicians colluded to create a moral panic even though it quickly became known that the letter was a fake.

**2013** Birmingham Education Partnership established to deliver some of the functions previously delivered by the Local Authority.

## Present

### Ethnicity, disadvantage and other variables in the analysis of Birmingham longitudinal school attainment datasets 2017

The findings of this research are to be found in a paper by Carl Parsons and Trevor Thompson. The following are some of the key points from this work.

They point out that “racism exists within British society and operates within most public and private services and enterprises, however implicitly” and that “economic disadvantage is a more powerful correlate with low attainment than gender or ethnicity”.

They also draw attention to the now mixed situation of Birmingham children’s attainment, pointing out that “some minorities perform well in education while others do not”; that “the relative inequities change over the course of children’s school careers” and that “the relative performance of ethnic minority pupils has changed in the last decade and earlier stark inequalities no longer apply in the same way or to the same degree in 2014”.

In their view the positive change has been brought about by “the huge inputs in multi-cultural education and the volume of National Strategies publications have had an impact. This stimulus has ceased since 2010.

They draw attention to the external (to school) factors in children’s lives that impact on their school attainment levels. Therefore, it is important that any strategy on education and underachievement should be located within a wholistic ‘life chances strategy’ which takes of poverty and disadvantage experienced by the children and their families, individually and as communities in their neighbourhoods.

They make a case that racism and inequality should be tackled within a multi-level an ecological framework.

### Ethnicity and educational outcomes in 2019

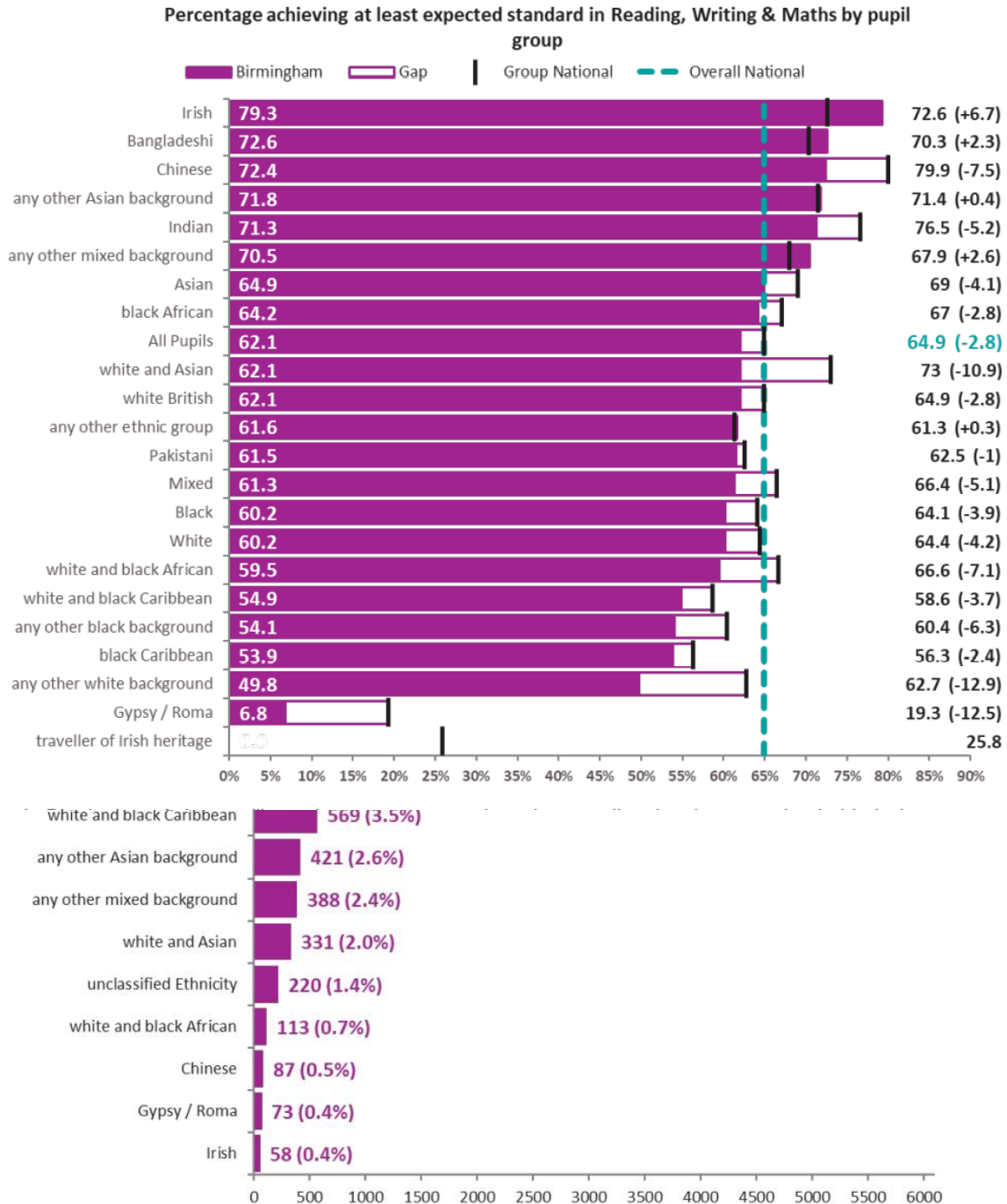
The following information is taken from the Annual Education Performance Report 2019<sup>7</sup> produced by the Data and Intelligence Team at Birmingham City Council. According to the data presented 34% of Birmingham pupils were White and 64.5% were from a range of ethnic minorities. Elsewhere the main pupil ethnic groups are shown as follows:

- White British 27.8%
- Pakistani 24.3%
- Black African 8.0%
- Bangladeshi 5.8%
- Indian 5.3%
- Black Caribbean 3.3%

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/16429/annual\\_education\\_performance\\_report\\_2019](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/16429/annual_education_performance_report_2019)

## Number of eligible pupils for key stage 2 results in Birmingham by ethnicity (main groups)



**Attainment** The following chart shows key stage 2 attainment for RWM across ethnic groups compared to the national averages of those groups. It is sorted so that the highest performing group in Birmingham is at the top.

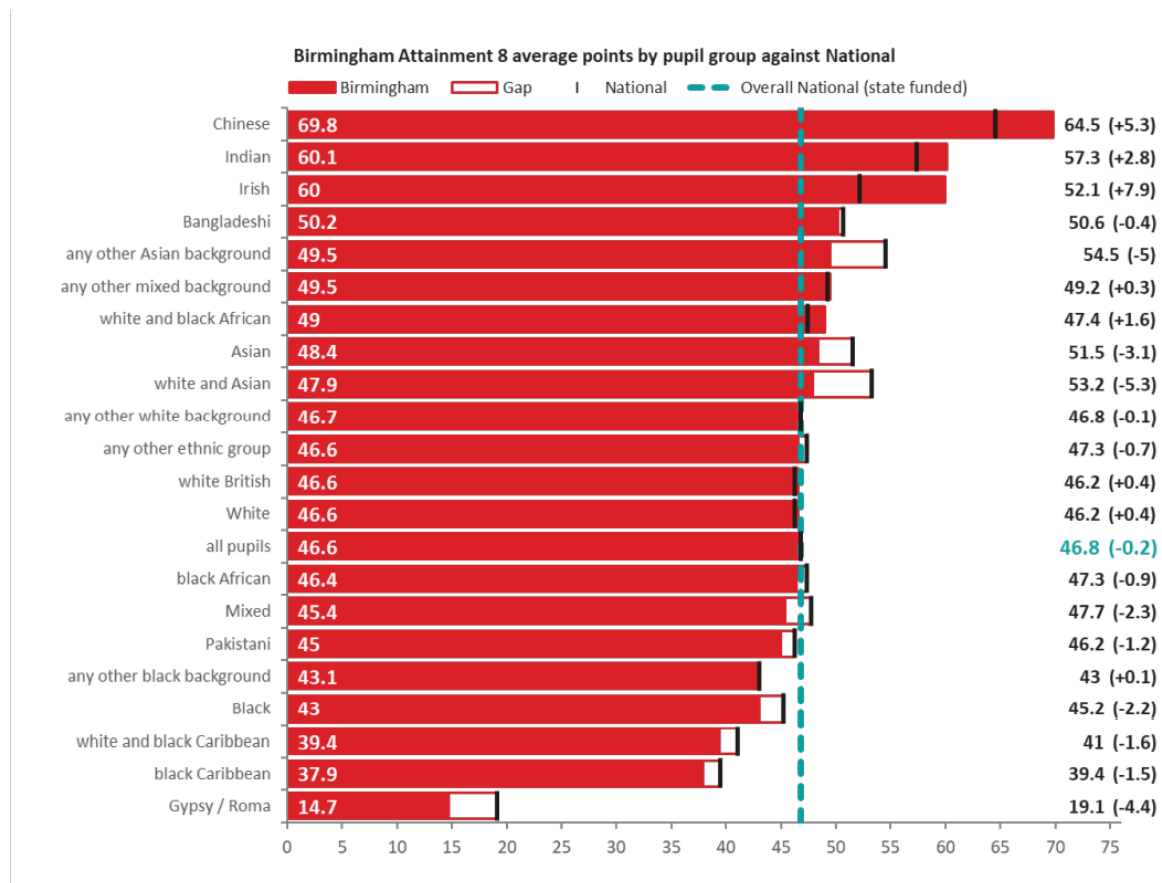
- Bangladeshi pupils have done particularly well being both above the overall national average and 2.3% above other Bangladeshi pupils nationally.

- Indian pupils are attaining higher than the overall national average
- Pakistani children are below the overall national.
- White pupils' attainment as a group is lower than overall national average by 4.7%.
- Black Caribbean attainment is 2.8% behind their equivalents nationally.

In overall Progress 8, Indian pupils have made the most progress, Pakistani pupils make the least progress and Black Caribbean pupils make less progress than the national average.

In Attainment 8, Indian pupils have performed strongly and are above the overall national average, Pakistani pupils are below the overall national average and Black Caribbean pupils are below Black Caribbean pupils nationally by 1.5 points.

**Attainment 8** The following chart shows Birmingham's attainment 8 performance by ethnicity ranked in descending order against the National equivalent where available. Results for Travellers of Irish heritage has been suppressed due to low numbers to preserve

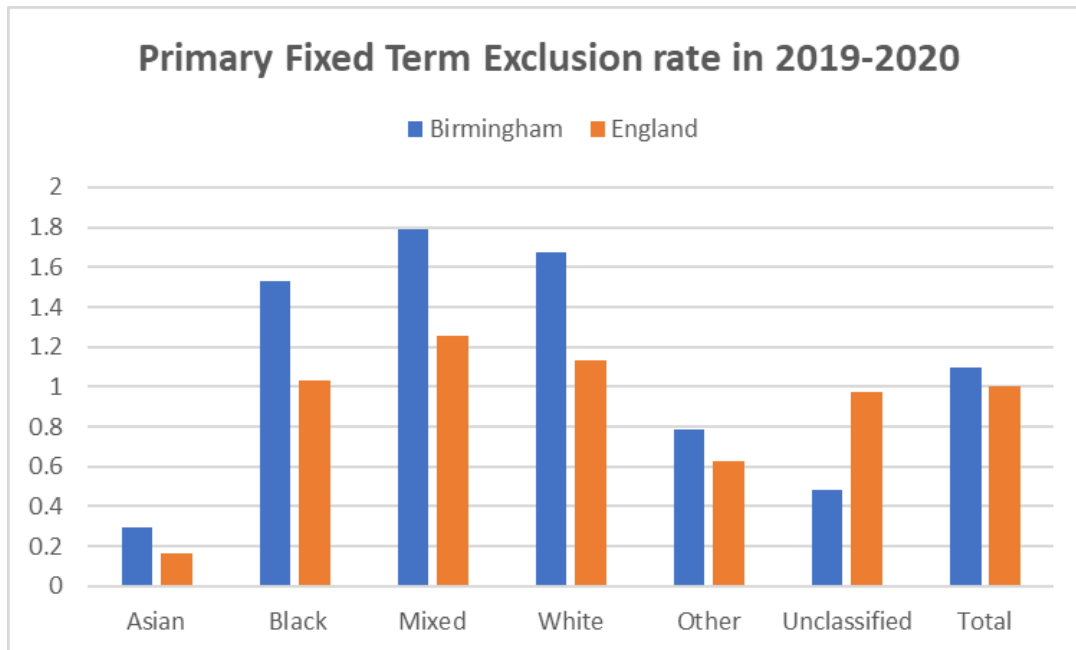


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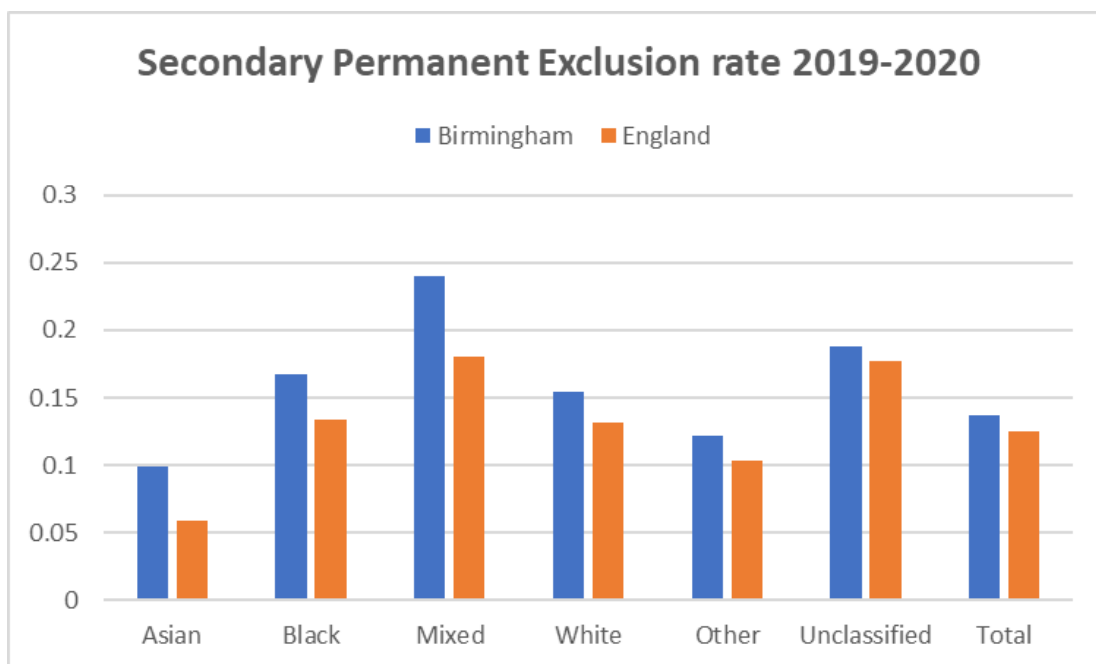
## Ethnicity and exclusion data

The following data from the DfE exclusion data releases and can be found at [Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England, Academic Year 2019/20 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

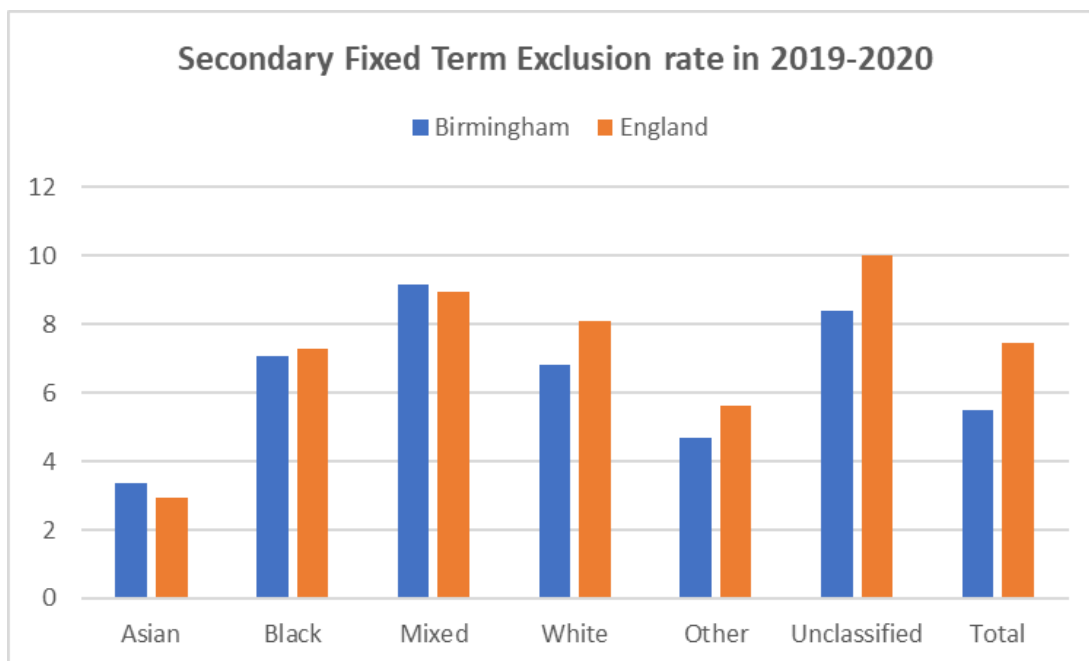
Permanent exclusions from Birmingham primary schools was more than twice the national rate in 2019-2020.



The rate of fixed term exclusions from Birmingham Primary schools was slightly above the national rate in 2019-2020. Pupils in the Black, Mixed and White ethnic groups were significantly more likely to be excluded in Birmingham.



Permanent exclusion rates were higher in Birmingham than they were nationally and more significantly so for Asian, Black and Mixed ethnic groups.



The rate of fixed term exclusions from Birmingham secondary schools was below the national rate overall. Asian and Mixed ethnic groups however were slightly above the rate for corresponding groups nationally.

Nationally exclusions continue to be a problem for the education system when it comes to Black Caribbean children. In 'The Experience of Black Caribbean Pupils in School Exclusion in England' Feyisa Demie, who is an expert on exclusions, points out that

*Nationally in 2014-15, 0.08% of pupil enrolments resulted in a permanent exclusion. However the figure for Black Caribbean pupils was 0.28%, indicating that they were more than three and a half times as likely to be permanently excluded as pupils overall. When breaking the statistics down by gender, Black Caribbean boys were even more over-represented in the permanent exclusion statistics. The only ethnic group that had higher rates of permanent exclusion nationally were "Gypsy/Roma", a relatively small ethnic group.*

*Overall the conclusion of this research confirm that the disproportionate exclusion of Black pupils from schools has been linked to a range of factors, including challenging what is racism in school settings, teachers' low expectations and institutional racism, lack of diversity in the school workforce, lack of effective training programme for teachers, educational psychologists, SENCOs and school staff on multicultural education, diversity and race issues.*

Secondary schools interested in minimising exclusions may wish to read this advice from Tim Brighouse<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/tim-brighouses-nine-ways-minimise-exclusions> accessed 1.6.2022.

Here are nine everyday secondary school practices which help (or hinder?) exclusions:

1. Focus on the quality of form-time and tutors - it affects all pupil outcomes especially attendance.
2. Avoid streaming and minimise setting in key stage 3. Research is unambiguous that streaming doesn't improve academic outcomes but does worsen behaviour for bottom streams.
3. Ensure that any setting that does take place is organised as fairly as possible to avoid any hint of streaming.
4. Develop a strong "house" system and involve all teaching and support staff. Link it to tutor groups with competitive team outcomes for attendance, behaviour and agreed extra-curricular activities as well as the academic. Focus pastoral responsibility on house or year leadership.
5. Identify on entry those whom primary schools say are least likely to cope with secondary school. The SLT should adopt three each and have two conversations a week with them in the corridors at break and lunch time.
6. Staff on break and lunch duty should have four "positive" conversations with different pupils each time. If pupils haven't got a worthwhile relationship with at least one adult they aren't really at school.
7. Create a coherent rationale for a "second timetable" to cover the one-off days and weeks when the main timetable is suspended: include at least one residential experience in it. Make sure the vulnerable take part.
8. Make sure awards assemblies and evenings celebrate a wide range of contributions and achievements, not just the academic. Instead of asking, how intelligent is this pupil, ask how is this pupil intelligent?
9. When it comes to the sanctions system have as many levels as possible before it gets to the ultimate "exclusion". Include "community service in and out of school" as an option before exclusion and involve parents and guardians early.<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

## Staff diversity

Staff diversity continues to be a problem nationally and within Birmingham. There is particular underrepresentation of Pakistanis in the profession when seen against the large presence of the community's children in Birmingham and nationally where they are the largest of ethnic minorities.

A recent article<sup>9</sup> pointed out:

*Staff of BAME heritage should be represented across the school and within the leadership team (regardless of the demographic of the school population) as this brings a rich cultural diversity to the school community, and fosters better understanding and tolerance among different groups of children.*

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/rethinking-how-we-can-improve-the-diversity-of-the-teaching-workforce-in-england> accessed 1.6.2022.



A locally focussed article by Iqbal asks: Is it important to have teachers from the same ethnic background as the pupils? He provides a full answer, including the following<sup>10</sup>:

*Within the field of education, researchers and policymakers have accepted that the workforce should be diverse and should reflect the ethnic diversity of society. Minority teachers are said to provide role models (Quioco & Rios, 2000), act as cultural brokers (Irvine, 1989), cultural experts (Ross, 2001; Basit & Santoro, 2012). For Howard (2010), minority teachers fulfilled the role of advocate for minority students. They are able to act as a 'bridge' between, and 'translators' of, minority and dominant cultures (Irvine (1989), a function which had been identified by Abbas (2004). In his Birmingham-based research he had found working class Asian parents particularly in favour of having Asian teachers.*

## Racial and religious literacy for education staff

It is important for education staff to understand that racism is a contemporary problem, not just something in the past and to understand that race affects profoundly the lives of young people and their communities. It is important to reflect on how racism is institutionalized in systems such as education.

Viv Grant, an education and equality expert, becoming racially literate requires that, as educators, we can:

- Engage with the emotional content of any conversation that has a focus on race.
- Welcome personal narratives and the lived experiences of all who are involved in the race conversation.
- Talk confidently about our own racial identities.
- Challenge racism at individual, group and system level.
- Feel confident in creating and engaging in healthy and reciprocal cross-racial relationships<sup>11</sup>.

The Scottish government has begun a programme that enables teachers to develop their racial literacy. The purpose of the programme is to empower educators to identify and implement anti-racist behaviours and processes in their everyday practice. In particular, it enables programme participants to learn about the nuances of racism and anti-racism (with the language to name it), develop the skills, confidence and resilience to engage in racial dialogue and develop a personalised action plan to lead anti-racist change<sup>12</sup>.

Religious literacy has been defined as “the skills and knowledge required to engage in an informed and confident way with faith communities” (DCLG, 2008, p33). Earlier, religious literacy was described as skills in understanding and assessing religious statements and

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.forwardpartnership.org.uk/?p=1198> Accessed 1.6.2022

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/blog/the-cost-of-not-being-racially-literate-diversity-equality-inclusion-black-lives-matters-political-impartiality-guidance-teaching-learning-pedagogy-racial-literacy/> accessed 1.6.2022.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202200283855/>

behaviour; discerning the difference between valuable and harmful aspects of religion and religions; appreciating religious architecture, art, literature and music without necessarily accepting all the beliefs that they express or assume; and making reasonable accommodation between people holding different religious and non-religious worldviews (GLA, 2007, p9).

Griffiths-Dickson (2015) likened such literacy “to the religious equivalent of emotional intelligence; a matter of knowledge, but also an ability to be informed, aware, at home with diverse religions; the ability to conduct oneself well when questions of faith and belief come to the fore”. Commission On Religion And Belief (2015) has reiterated the need for religion and belief literacy especially amongst those in educational establishments.

## Future: Birmingham education race equality manifesto<sup>13</sup>

We believe that sometime in the future, racism – as we experience it now, in all its guises – will not exist – brap: Antiracist Futures<sup>14</sup>

### Vision

In our view the only good education is that which is antiracist in outlook and in practice, and which is delivered by staff who are ethnically diverse and who are culturally competent and racially and religiously literate. The outcome of such an education are culturally competent and racially and religiously literate future generations who are able to fully realise their human potential in the form of qualifications and who, as citizens, are able to play their full and proper role in the city, society and the world.

The following are suggested steps towards achieving the above vision:

1. All Birmingham schools and education providers to commit to antiracist education<sup>15</sup> (as their contribution towards helping Birmingham to become an antiracist city). Colmers School is offered as an example of an antiracist school<sup>16</sup>.
2. Schools and education providers to commit to have in place a workforce that reflects the city’s superdiversity, especially in leadership roles. Positive Action should be implemented in order to address underrepresentation. Steps should be taken to develop and recruit local talent.
3. School governing bodies and multi-academy trust boards should sign up to the Race Equality Code in order to reflect the city’s superdiversity.
4. Schools to commit to the teaching of antiracist curriculum especially Black, Asian and Marginalised community histories (following the Welsh example).
5. Schools should commit to reducing exclusions especially amongst ethnic minorities.

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<sup>13</sup> The manifesto is modelled on the Birmingham Race Equality Manifesto.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.brap.org.uk/post/creating-an-anti-racist-future>

<sup>15</sup> <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/promoting-race-equality-and-anti-racist-education/> . In addition

<sup>16</sup> <https://colmers.bham.sch.uk/diversity-equity-inclusion/>

6. Schools and education providers should strive to improve cultural competence, knowledge of their school's immediate community and racial and religious literacies amongst staff.
7. Schools should develop strategies to addressing educational underachievement of particular ethnic minorities and disadvantaged White children<sup>17</sup>.
8. Schools should contribute to the development of the Schools Race Equality Standard and then adopt and implement the Standard.
9. Student Councils and the schools' community (parents, carers, others) should be fully involved in shaping the antiracist work of the school.
10. A Birmingham-wide online journal should be developed to facilitate for schools to share their antiracist education practice.

## Priorities

1. School governing bodies and multi-academy trust boards should sign up to the Race Equality Code in order to reflect the city's superdiversity on their Boards and in their workforce and in the provision of an inclusive, diverse, anti-racist curriculum.
2. Schools should develop strategies to addressing educational underachievement of particular ethnic minorities and disadvantaged White children<sup>18</sup>.
3. Schools should commit to reducing exclusions especially amongst ethnic minorities.

Dr Karamat Iqbal 1.11.2023

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<sup>17</sup> Adjournment debate led by Richard Burden MP

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090519/halltext/90519h0011.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Adjournment debate led by Richard Burden MP

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090519/halltext/90519h0011.htm>