



Tackling institutional racism within your school or MAT

What does “institutional racism” mean?

- **Racism** means “prejudice, discrimination or antagonism by an individual, community or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalised.”
- **Institutional Racism** (or Systemic racism) was memorably defined in the MacPherson Report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence as “The Collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.”
- **The Commission for Racial Equality** adds “*If racial consequences accrue to institutional laws customs or practices, that institution is racist whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racial intentions*”

The 2 underlined sections can be the most challenging. No Oxfordshire school sets out to be racist – our schools are “moral” places which place a high priority on inclusion. However, it can be hard for majority white British staff, management and governing boards to recognise when they are being unwittingly racist. Sensitivity to the issues, training and careful thinking are the only way to mitigate potential barriers.

Oxfordshire has a very mixed pattern of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds in its primary schools. 55% of pupils in Oxford city come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Banbury also has significant ethnic minority populations.

Meanwhile, schools in both our market towns and villages can be very non-diverse.

Oxford city schools have to have policies and practices in place to meet the EAL needs for children who speak one of 78 different languages (per OCC research from 2019).

Schools with low numbers of pupils / students from ethnic minority backgrounds need to develop policies and practices to ensure that they can fully access everything the school has to offer.



The needs of ethnic minority staff must also be carefully thought through, and appropriate policies and practices must be put in place.

Boards need to make a particular effort to recruit governors and trustees from ethnic minorities. This is a national problem which can only be solved at the local level.

What do Governors need to ask?

How do we know if our school or MAT or school is institutionally racist?

- Monitor complaints and grievances to check if there are any patterns which might indicate a problem
- Check social media and undertake parent, staff and pupil surveys
- Keep eyes and ears open in meetings and during Governor visits, consider the diversity within (for example) books and materials provided for pupils, wall displays and all outgoing communications. Be hyper attentive to detail, nuance and language and any images used.
- Are staff and pupils tolerant of other beliefs and views contrary to their own, and able to identify and combat discrimination?

What is the role of Governors in tackling institutional racism?

Governors must:

- Ensure that the school complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty established in the Equality Act 2010
- Check that the school's policies are being implemented consistently and effectively
- Review them regularly and amend as necessary
- Regularly consider the diversity of your Board: does it reflect the community you serve? Does it provide you with a range of views and experiences?
- Ensure that your curriculum has been thoughtfully planned to reflect diversity and inclusion and that it meets the needs of your local community.
- Consider undertaking a Diversity audit in addition to a Skills audit when you seek to fill governor vacancies
- Consider the diversity within the school's staff body: does it also reflect the community you serve?