

Black Lives Matter – Bolton School’s Response

The global discussions sparked by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in June 2020 brought issues of systemic racism and unconscious bias to the forefront of our collective consciousness.

The Bolton School Foundation acknowledges its role in fighting ignorance and inequality. The School was impressed by the number of current pupils, members of staff and Alumni who were vocal in condemning racism in all its forms in the wake of these discussions, most notably through the open letter sent by a group of Alumni and other members of the School community to the Headmaster and Headmistress, which urged the School to make a sustained commitment to anti-racism.

The values of diversity and inclusion are integral to the aims of the Bolton School Foundation and we are wholeheartedly committed to reviewing and improving our practices and to contributing to the critical work which will need to take place nationally in this regard. We believe we are in a strong position to do so: thanks in large part to the funding provided by the Bursary Fund, the make-up of the student body across both Divisions in terms of ethnic breakdown is an accurate reflection of that of the local community, and the School endeavours to encourage well-qualified BAME students to join the teaching profession through the Initial Teaching Training schemes which it hosts.

A number of further positive actions have already been instigated since June. These include:

- The sourcing of a potential lead advisor for the consultation and for staff training in related matters;
 - Girls’ Division Senior School staff had the first tranche of this training during September 2020 INSET sessions, on the subject of Diversity and Unconscious Bias, which was very well received and has led to numerous avenues for further exploration;
- A review of the PSHE curriculum in both Divisions, in order to ensure that they meet fully the Independent Schools’ Inspectorate’s regulations on matters of diversity and inclusion;
- A full curriculum review in both Divisions;
 - In the Girls’ Division, this was completed in the Summer Term of 2020 and outlined areas which embraced issues designed to bring BIPOC, BIWOC and BAME identities to the forefront of girls’ consciousness. This audit was subsequently analysed and discussed by the Girls’ Division’s SMT and Heads of Department, who noted the following positive changes and areas for improvement:
 - Year 10’s development of a PSHEE session for use across the School;
 - Changes in the History curriculum which have led to a greater emphasis on diversity;
 - Changes in the English examination specifications which have led to reduced emphasis on diversity in exam years;
 - Dominance of white males in Science specifications;
 - Necessity to ensure increased diversity of speakers invited to attend enrichment or careers events.

- In the Boys' Division, this is intended for completion by the end of the Autumn Term of 2020; some immediate changes have already been actioned, including:
 - The repurposing of a Year 8 'Language in the Media' unit of teaching to be focused on the BLM movement, racial diversity and inclusion;
 - A change to a Year 12 option choice in English in order to explicitly focus on those same issues;
 - A Year 9 History module will now focus on American politics from the era of slavery;
 - The Geography department will teach boys about Lord Leverhulme's activities in the Congo alongside their learning about his work at Port Sunlight.
- Continued endeavours to ensure that topics of racism, representation and inclusion remain at the forefront of the pastoral agenda across the Foundation.

The School is determined that its response to the issues raised by the BLM movement should be meaningful and have a long-term impact on the culture of the School. Whilst much positive change has already taken place, there clearly remains further work to be done, not least the completion of the School's consultation, the commencement of which has, regrettably, been unavoidably delayed by the significant resource and planning which has been required to ensure the School was able to reopen to pupils in a Covid-secure manner in time for the start of the new academic year.

Despite this delay, the Foundation's commitment to improving its approach to diversity and inclusivity remains absolute. We continue to welcome the contribution of Alumni, pupils, parents and all other members of the School community in this work.