

Cotham School
Cotham Lawn Road
Cotham
Bristol
BS6 6DT

North Bristol Post 16 Centre
Charnwood House
30 Cotham Park
Bristol BS6 6BU

Monday 8th June 2020

Dear Cotham School and North Bristol Post 16 Centre,

We are writing to you as alumni of Cotham School and North Bristol Post 16 Centre (NBP16) in regards to the recent events surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement and the systematic racism entrenched in our society. We believe that as educational institutions, you have a way to actively fight this racism and therefore we are writing to urge you to take action in calling for, and implementing, a decolonised national British curriculum.

We note that it is currently not compulsory in the U.K. for primary or secondary schools to teach colonisation, slavery, or any other atrocities that Britain played a significant role in throughout history—a role that is severely understated to this day. As we reflect upon our education with you, we feel we were provided with a predominantly white, eurocentric perspective that has often left many of us ignorant to the racism and injustices that Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour face.

This is a national problem. The Impact of Omission survey, released on the 1st June 2020, found 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
- 71.5% were taught about the Battle of Hastings, whereas only 5.2% learned about the role of BAME soldiers in WWI and II.

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'
26.6% replied 'not at all'

(All this data is available on the website: <https://impactofomission.squarespace.com>)

We believe it is vital that young people are taught an honest portrayal of the British colonial empire, alongside acknowledgement of the vast contribution that Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour have made to society. This is most clear in teaching related to History, however, we do not believe this is the only area of the curriculum that needs addressing. We therefore urge you to do all you can within Cotham School and the NBP16 to decolonise the curriculum and join our voice in the demanding that the Department for Education reform the national curriculum to:

- include a variety of historical teachings, that touch not only on the UK's "highlights", but the realities of colonialism and slavery at the hands of our ancestors
- include geopolitical history and perspectives from other countries, encompassing each continent
- ensure English curriculum readings include texts from equitably balanced white and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour authors, and ensure this balance is reflected in the literature available in the school library
- ensure music/art/textile lessons appreciate the cultural influence Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour artists have had throughout history, and how they have used their medium to amplify their voices, and that it does so without appropriation

We welcome the letter published on 5th June 2020, calling out racism in society and at school, addressing white privilege and providing resources for education and support. We would urge you to continue this allyship with action. For example, reflecting the diversity called for in the curriculum in your teaching hierarchy and enabling support for BAME staff to succeed and lead, supporting students to organise, enquire and learn around social justice issues, and being an actively anti-racist voice in the community, calling out discrimination and injustice.

We thank you for taking the time to read our letter, and thank you in advance for your action and solidarity.

Yours sincerely,

(Names redacted)