CHAWREC

CHESHIRE, HALTON & WARRINGTON
RACE & EQUALITY CENTRE

Research on racism and anti-racism in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Secondary Schools
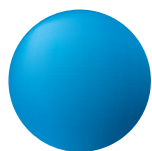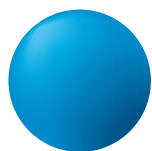
SCHOOLS
STAND UP 2
RACISM

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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present to you this final report of the Schools Stand Up 2 Racism research project, which is the culmination of over three years of hard work.

Education has always been a key part of our work at the Race & Equality Centre; indeed it is listed within our governing documents as such. Despite this we have never had any funding to undertake specific work in this field and therefore any work has always been rather 'piecemeal': speaking at conferences, undertaking the odd day of training and advising individual schools when there were issues. We were consequently delighted to secure funding through the Big Lottery, working with MMU Cheshire to carry out a dedicated piece of research to determine levels of racism in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington secondary schools. This we hoped would give us a better understanding of the landscape of education and race equality; to determine the type, nature and frequency of racism, specific to these areas.

This has been the first time that research of this type has been carried out in our area and we used a variety of different methods to engage and secure data to make sure we had covered all possible aspects of the research questions. There have been some fascinating discussions amongst our young people, and what is heartening to see in this report is how articulate and interested in this subject they really are. We need to ensure that we build on this in future and work with young people to develop solutions to the issue of racism.

For us, the publication of this report is only the beginning – it has highlighted gaps and issues that we now need to tackle. We have addressed some of the issues around training with the development of online resources for teachers, the new e-learning package we have developed is an excellent start, but is by no means the be all and end all. There is much more work to do, but we need the goodwill of schools, governors, parents and young people to make a real difference.

We would like to thank all the schools who took part in the research and the young people who took part in the discussion groups. A special vote of thanks must go to the primary author of this report – Mandy Roberts, our project officer who has been the core driver for this research throughout and a key reason for its success.

Shantele Janes Director
Cheshire, Halton & Warrington Race & Equality Centre

1 Introduction

Education has been at the forefront of the fight against racism since the middle of the 20th century. In the second decade of the new millennium, though, racism continues to be an issue in education, although this is more widely recognised and researched in urban, multi-ethnic settings.

Schools in mainly White areas (those areas with an ethnic minority population of less than 5%), which make up the majority of the country, remain relatively under researched. There are notable exceptions to this, but they remain few and far between and no research has previously been carried out within Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

It was within this context that Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC) became increasingly aware of anecdotal evidence that suggested racism was being experienced by ethnic minority students in secondary schools within these areas, but that this was not always responded to by schools in a satisfactory way and often the incidents were repeated.

CHAWREC therefore became interested in helping schools to address racism in more effective and sustainable ways, not only for the benefit of ethnic minority students, but also to assist White British students in preparing for life in an increasingly globalised world.

However, in order to provide this assistance, CHAWREC first needed to understand the issues. A research project was therefore conceived, to explore the extent of racism faced by pupils in our secondary schools, investigate the ways in which schools tackle racist incidents and teach race equality, and to map examples of best practice and innovation in these areas.

In partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), CHAWREC made a successful bid to the Lottery to fund this project and Schools Stand Up to Racism was born. Three years later, we are pleased to present the findings of our research and hope that these will provide the basis for successful race equality interventions in partnership with the schools in our area.

Definitions

2

Since our project looked at race and racism, it is perhaps first useful to give some definitions of these and other related terms.

Race

'Race' is a term that is used to categorise people according to things such as appearance, culture, religion and country of origin. These categorical groups are then used to create hierarchies in which some races are positioned as superior to others.

However, biological and social sciences have demonstrated that the concept of 'race' is not rooted in any objectively measurable differences such as genetics or intelligence (Rose, 2009). Race is also a fluid idea that varies greatly between social and historical contexts. For example, the ways in which racial categories have been used in the UK Census has changed many times and continues to be an issue for debate.

Race is therefore not fixed and permanent and rooted in some essential part of those who belong to a particular racial category. It is a socially constructed concept; something that has been invented by humans as a means of crudely categorising people and creating boundaries between 'them' and 'us'. It does not reflect any objective ways of defining people.

Despite this, race continues to be used as a social marker that results in very real inequalities, affecting the life experience of many people.

Ethnicity

Like race, ethnicity is a socially constructed term and its meaning is hotly contested. It is generally used to differentiate between groups based on cultural heritage, traditions and practices (Garner, 2002). Ethnicity can be a useful way of recognising groups that have previously not been included in concepts of race, such as Eastern European migrants and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller peoples.

Racism

There is no one clear definition of racism, although it broadly describes the ways in which the concepts of race and ethnicity are used to disadvantage some groups. Within research and practice there have been clear moves away from defining racism as a personal attitude and towards understanding it as something that is deeply embedded in social systems and practices. Incidents of personal racism must therefore be viewed as taking place within this much wider context.

An example of this is the way in which migrants are portrayed by the government and the media as a problem for Britain and a drain on national resources. This translates into personal racism when someone accuses their migrant neighbour of stealing a British person's job and tells them to go back to their own country. This illustrates how racism is not confined to the psychology of aberrant individuals, but is deeply embedded in society and merely reflected in personal attitudes and behaviours.

Racisms change according to place, time and the type of ideas that they are being used to advance. Sometimes racism is used to create new reasons for exclusion and sometimes it draws on 'traditional' racist ideas to perpetuate existing exclusions. For example, current Islamophobic discourses closely reflect the anti-Semitic discourses of the 18th and 19th Centuries. These discourses reflect ideas about the 'other' as the enemy of 'civilised' people or nations and have been re-used throughout history in different contexts and against different groups.

Institutional racism

Institutional racism describes the presence of racism in social systems and structures. It was brought to the fore in the Macpherson report, which followed the investigation into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence. This was significant because it was the first time that the state acknowledged racism was a feature of its institutions. Macpherson's intention was to move the debate about racism away from the 'superficial and extreme notion of racism that had previously characterised the policy debate' (Gillborn, 2006, p85), in which only racist individuals were seen to be responsible for the causes and effects of prejudice and discrimination.

In the Macpherson report, institutional racism was defined 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 behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance and thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.
(MACPHERSON, 1999, P77)

To continue with the previous example about government and media discourses about migrants, institutional racism comes about when these discourses are translated into policy in ways which disadvantage minority ethnic groups. Currently this includes proposals for certain groups of migrants to pay a 'bond' in order to enter the country (REF), or to pay to access the NHS (REFS).

However, there is an important caveat to Macpherson's definition, as it can give the impression that it only operates when ethnic minority people are present. Asare (2009) makes this point well:

This important definition suggests that racism operates only in relation to direct contact with minority ethnic people. What the definition fails to encompass is the possibility that racist constructs can be present and have an effect on the culture and the assumptions of an organisation, even when no, or few, minority ethnic people are present.
(ASARE, 2009, P8)

It is therefore important to emphasise that institutional racism can be present in any organisation that exists within a racialised society such as the UK, regardless of the presence or absence of ethnic minority people.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)

Throughout this report, students who identify themselves as coming from a minoritised group in terms of race or ethnicity will be referred to as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students. As with all terms used to describe these minoritised groups, this one is not without its issues. However, since it is the term that is still widely used within education, it is the one that has been adopted here.

3 Racism in Education

3.1 The development of anti-racism in education

Education has become one of the main areas for activity in the fight against racism in the UK. Anti-racist work within education has a long and turbulent history and has mirrored changing political thought throughout the decades:

- **Assimilation (1950s – 1970s):** Ethnic minorities were expected to adopt British customs and habits in order to make 'them' more like 'us'. In schools this involved practices such as banning pupils from speaking any other language than English, both at school and at home.

- **Multiculturalism (1980s – 1990s):** Diversity was celebrated rather than eliminated, in order to make 'them' more acceptable to 'us'. In schools this included learning about different cultures, faiths, languages and ethnicity, which although a positive step forward, avoided direct discussions of racism or racial discrimination.

- **Antiracism (1990s onwards):** Antiracist education seeks to deal with issues of power, justice and inequality and address issues of racism within the formal and hidden curriculum (Arshad, 2012). It focuses on 'us' rather than 'them' as the solution to racism. Unfortunately, antiracist education has never been taken up as widely as multicultural education.

Alongside these developments sit a number of reports into racism in education, whose recommendations have to some extent helped shape policy and practice.

1985 The Swann Report

- Emerged from a working committee set up to look at differences in achievement between ethnic minority groups

- Recommended 'Education for All' which encompassed the eradication of discrimination and ensuring all students reached their full potential.

- Questioned whether the term 'multicultural education' was appropriate.

1985 The Burnage Report

- Report into the murder of Ahmed Iqbal Ullah, a 13 year old student at Burnage High School in Manchester.

- One of the first documents to seriously consider the question of racism and education.

- Uncovered systemic failures and highlighted the ways in which racism can remain unidentified and invisible in schools.

- Highly critical of the type of 'symbolic' anti-racism practiced at Burnage High School and emphasised need for effective anti-racist education.

1999 The Macpherson Report

- Report into the Metropolitan Police's handling of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence.

- Found institutional racism in the police and all key British institutions, including education.

- Recommendations for education were:

  - Changes should be made to the National Curriculum, aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism

  - A higher profile was needed for these issues in Ofsted inspections

◗ New duties placed on schools and LEAs to address racism

◗ 'Racist incidents' should be monitored and the publication of this data to occur annually

3.2   Macpherson and Education

Macpherson's definition of a racist incident is as follows:

A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.
(MACPHERSON, 1999: RECOMMENDATION 12).

This definition was designed to ensure that any report of a racist incident would be taken seriously and investigated, regardless of the opinion of the person to whom it was reported. This does not mean that if, after investigation, the incident still has to be treated as racist if no evidence of racism was found. It means the report must be taken seriously and fully investigated in the first place, rather than dismissed as perhaps teasing or a falling out. It also meant that someone other than the victim could report the incident if they felt it was racist.

The Macpherson report was an important development, as it signalled an attempt to change in the ways in which racism was conceptualised. Most importantly, Macpherson highlighted how institutional racism is present in all British public bodies, including education. In the debates that followed, the reasons for inequalities between ethnic groups in education have been publically acknowledged as being about discrimination within the education system, rather than as a result of the 'culture', 'work ethic' or intelligence levels of members of those groups.

These inequalities manifest themselves in a number of ways:

● in educational attainment between different ethnic groups (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Gillborn and Demack, 2012; Haynes et al., 2006; Heath and Brinbaum, 2007)

● in school exclusions (Blair, 2001; The Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013)

● in access to higher education and graduation rates (Connor et al., 2004)

● via discrimination and racism towards BME students from teachers and other students (Cole, 2004; Crozier and Davies, 2008; Shirin, 2012)

Most of the research on the inequalities in UK education has taken place in urban, multi-ethnic settings. However, since DfES (2004) figures demonstrate that two thirds of UK schools are mainly White, this means that the majority of the country's schools are under-represented in research on race and racism in education. Mainly White schools are defined as those where the BME student population is five percent or less.

There are notable exceptions though, in which research into mainly White areas has found that there are differences in that ways in which racial discrimination manifests, is conceptualised and dealt with when compared to more ethnically diverse areas. The next section will give a broad overview of these findings.

4 Racism in Mainly White Schools: Previous Research

The research that has taken place in mainly White areas such as Cumbria, Scotland, Wiltshire and Cornwall (Arshad et al. 2005; Asare, 2009; Brown, 1990; Cline et al. 2002, Donald et al. 1995; Gaine, 1987, 1995, 2000, 2005; Knowles and Ridley, 2005) has demonstrated the presence of racism in schools in these areas.

Despite this, White British staff and pupils in these schools tend to believe that racism is not a problem for them since there are very few ethnic minority pupils present.

However, it is not the presence or absence of ethnic minority students that causes racism, it is present throughout society and will be expressed whether or not ethnic minorities are present. A good analogy might be to consider whether sexist attitudes and behaviours are likely to be found in an all-boys' school despite the absence of girls.

In reality, the relatively low numbers of ethnic minority students can make mean that these students are hyper-visible, more exposed and isolated than in more ethnically diverse areas. Gaine (2000, 2005) argues that a lack of significant numbers of ethnic minority students also means that prejudice and stereotypes about ethnic minority people are not challenged or modified by repeated close contact with real people from these groups.

Accounts of racism from ethnic minority students in the schools studied included examples of physical violence, but the majority of examples were of students being called racist names; of being expected to tolerate 'jokes' that involve reference to their colour or cultural stereotypes; of their behaviour being essentialised as being a result of their 'culture' by teachers; pressure to 'assimilate' into White British culture and countless other forms of what is termed 'everyday' racism.

'Everyday' racist attitudes and behaviours are those that are most likely to remain invisible. This is because they are often not recognised as racism, since they constitute normalised ways of viewing and discussing people from ethnic minorities. This lack of recognition can lead schools in mainly White areas to believe that racism is not really a problem for them.

Gaine (2005) makes this point, arguing that racism is present everywhere in society as a result of these normalised discourses, not just in more ethnically diverse areas: 'Racism is about material practices where BME people are present and discursive practices whether or not they are present' (Gaine, 2005, p69). In other words, although the numbers of recorded racist incidents may be lower in mainly White areas than in more multicultural ones, racist discourse is no less prevalent. Asare (2009) terms racism a 'common reference point' that finds expression through insults or jokes, rather than something that only manifests in certain circumstances and at certain times.

Mainly White schools can also be reluctant to identify the presence of racism at an institutional level. This can be linked back to Asare's (2009) criticism of the definition of institutional racism in the Macpherson report but also to the 'official discourse' about racism that comes from government, the media and other authoritative sources. This discourse continues to position racism as the result of the actions of aberrant individuals, rather than as something deeply embedded in society.

Asare argues that this is compounded in mainly White areas by a reliance on responding to racist incidents as the main way of recognising and tackling racism. She contends that in the areas she studied, racism is conceptualised as 'occurring solely in the moment of a racist incident or in the personality of the pupil who is the perpetrator' (Asare,

2009, p6) and not as part of any wider social context. As a result, schools see the way to deal with racism as being via responses to one-off incidents and the punishment of the perpetrators, thus further individualising the issue.

> *Racialised intervention in predominantly White schools tends to focus solely, and often simplistically, on the way that racist incidents are responded to, rather than giving attention to the delivery of a curriculum that will open up and explore diversity.*
> **(ASARE, 2009, P4)**

Asare argues it is much more useful to consider racist incidents from a perspective that takes into account the structural, political, cultural and ideological background to an incident, but that schools are not currently required to do this, nor to take on the more subtle manifestations of social exclusion that are not necessarily defined as racist incidents.

Cline et al. (2002), found that teachers felt they lacked confidence in discussing and tackling racism with their students. This was due to a lack of training in this area, a lack of experience and a fear of saying the wrong thing or being accused of racism themselves. Gaine (2005) highlights how in-service training is crucial if teachers are to feel more confident in widening out the debate on race and racism with students and embedding it more deeply within the curriculum in order to challenge cultural understandings.

In addition to this, the relatively low numbers of racist incidents in mainly White areas, when compared with more ethnically diverse areas, serves to further strengthen the argument that it is the presence of ethnic minority students that causes racism to manifest. However, many of those who had experienced racism were reluctant to report it due to fear of consequences from fellow students, because they felt

the teachers wouldn't understand or because they feared being branded as a trouble maker. Some students who had reported incidents before said they were unlikely to do so again because of the poor way in which their reports were dealt with.

A summary of previous research

● Schools in mainly White areas tend to see racism as less of an issue because of the relatively small numbers of BME students present.

● Racism is often conceptualised within schools as being about racist individuals, rather than a society-wide and institutional issue.

● Racism is present in mainly White schools, but manifests more frequently through 'everyday' forms of racist discourse.

● BME students in mainly White schools experience racism.

● For a variety of reasons, BME students can be reluctant to report racism to teachers.

● The small numbers of BME students in mainly White schools can make them hyper-visible and more isolated.

● Teachers in mainly White schools can lack confidence in discussing race and tackling racism with students due to a lack of training and experience.

● Racism tends to get addressed mainly through one-off responses to racist incidents and the punishment of individuals.

5 Our research

The research carried out by Schools Stand Up 2 Racism was designed to include the perspectives of teachers, white British students and BME students and the methods used reflect this.

All 60 state funded secondary schools in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington were invited to take part in the research and 21 of these agreed to do so. Each school nominated a member of staff to act as our contact.

These schools then took part in:

● an initial survey to gather baseline information about the school - 21 were returned.

● an interview with the nominated staff member - 16 of these took place.

After this initial phase, five schools were selected to be worked with in the second phase. The selections were made in order to provide a good mix of schools in terms of location, numbers of BME pupils, numbers of reported racist incidents and socio-economic profile.

These five schools then took part in:

● A voluntary student survey of Year 8 and Year 11 students - 1568 were returned

● Two focus groups, one with students from Year 8 and one with students from Year 11, about their experiences of racism at school and anti-racist education.

● Ethnodrama groups with Year 8 students. These involved the presentation of short dramas based on some of our findings, followed by discussion of the issues raised.

● Small group interviews with BME students.

Our research questions were as follows:

1. What is the extent of racism faced by young people in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington secondary schools?

2. How are schools tackling incidents of racism?

3. What kind of strategies do pupils and teachers think could be employed to help deal with racism and racist incidents?

Our findings have been analysed in line with these questions.

6 Our findings

6.1 What is the extent of racism faced by young people in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington secondary schools?

6.1.1 'It's not a major issue': Perceptions of racism

When responding to the student survey, the overall majority (79 % of Year 8s and 71 % of Year 11s) said that they thought racism only happens 'sometimes' or 'occasionally' in their school (see Figure 1). However, when analysed by ethnicity, the results show that BME students were almost twice as likely to think racism happens 'very often' or 'often' compared to White British students (21 % of BME students versus 11 % of White British students (see Figure 2). This is perhaps not surprising given that it is BME students who are more likely to experience racism.

When we spoke to the students in the focus groups about racism in their schools, the majority echoed the idea that it was not a big problem, with most citing a lack of BME pupils as the reason for this rather than a sense that anti-racism was deeply embedded within school. Most characterised racism as being a problem confined to racist individuals who, lacking many 'victims' in the form of BME pupils, were less able to carry out their racist sentiments.

> *It's not a major issue because there's not that many ethnic minorities...The opportunities for racist people to be racist are few and far between.*
> — **YEAR 11 STUDENT**

> *There's nothing really to be racist about in this school.*
> — **YEAR 8 STUDENT**

Figure 1: Student responses to how often racism happens in school, by year group
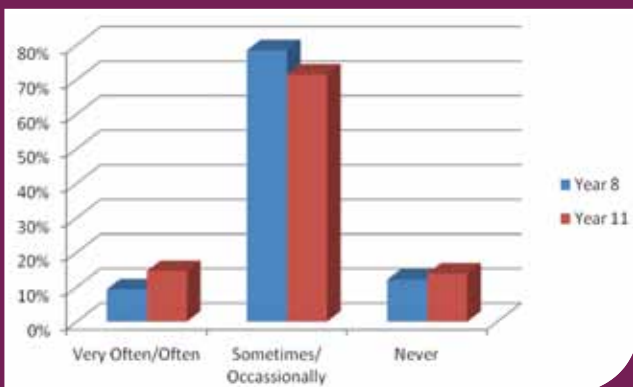
How often do you think racism happens in your school?

Figure 2: Student responses to how often racism happens in school, by ethnicity

How often do you think racism happens in your school?

This perception that racism seldom happens could perhaps be down to the way in which students understood and defined it. In the focus groups and ethnodrama groups, students 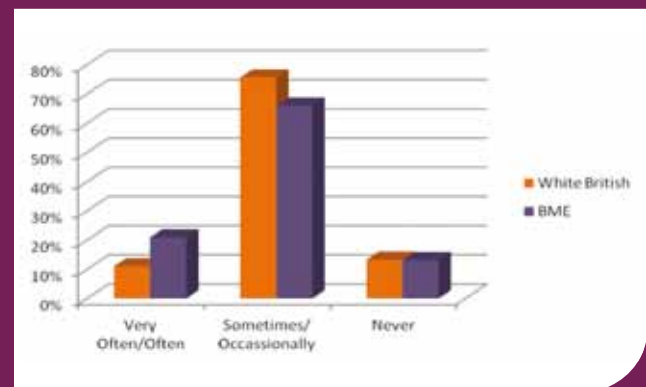struggled to give clear definitions of what racism was. When they were able to, they described it as being something that one person does to another, such as treating them unfairly or using an abusive term towards them. Many students also expressed confusion over what did and didn't constitute racism and this suggested that perhaps it sometimes goes unnoticed.

> *There's not racism where they go up to each other...and start calling them all these names. But there is a lot of racism where they're just sat down and going 'Oh yeah, I saw all these Pakis on TV' and stuff like that...They always talk about it and if that's racism, it's racism all the time.*
> — **YEAR 8 STUDENT**

There were other indications from students that racism and racist language are regular occurrences within school, but have become normalised.

> *I think racist language does get used everyday...it's just, like, everyday conversation...Nobody takes it personally coz it's just the norm because it happens everywhere.*
> — **YEAR 11 STUDENT**

There were some students who voiced resentment at what they viewed as an over sensitivity about racism from BME groups in general. They felt that racism only remained an issue because people were continually speaking about it and that it would just disappear if no-one mentioned it. Some said that they felt White people were now more discriminated against than Black people. Students also cited a number of myths about racism and anti-racism, often under the banner of political correctness. For example, one Year 11 student said she did not understand why people were not allowed to sing 'Baa baa black sheep' anymore. Others felt that people get offended to easily.

> *I think today everything's politically correct and people call everyone racist for things that are very little and insignificant. Some things are racist but you've gotta be able to notice when things are racist and when things are not and everyone calls people racist for no reason. It's only certain things that are racist, saying Paki shop is not racist, people just think it is coz today everything's politically correct. You've gotta say it in the right way or someone'll get offended without even knowing the whole story, coz they're just nosey.*
> — **YEAR 8 STUDENT**

The idea that racism is not an issue in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington schools was echoed by many of the teachers during the interviews. Most felt that racism was not a big problem in their school and, again, this was largely cited as being due to the lack of a large ethnic minority presence.

> *Yeah, I think it probably would get a higher priority if we thought we'd got a problem but because it's so rare, I just think that's why it hasn't really had...I think it's just one of those things that hasn't ever been an issue.*
> — **TEACHER**

Like the students, teachers also tended to characterise racism as being largely confined to the acts of aberrant individuals, but that this is managed by dealing with these on an incident-by-incident basis.

> *We do have challenging students but there's never a thing, they seem to realise that line when it's gone too far and that's why we don't seem to have repeat incidents with [the] same individuals and same situations.*
> — **TEACHER**

However some teachers also, like their students, felt that there might be some confusion amongst teaching staff as to what did or did not constitute racism and that this might lead to less recognition of racism when it occurred. Most teachers also felt that they or their colleagues sometimes lacked confidence in identifying and tackling racism and that this was largely down to a lack of training, both during initial teacher education and as part of their in-service training. Very few teachers said they had received any training specifically on racism and anti-racism and all teachers we spoke to said that they felt this type of training would be beneficial to their staff.

> *Although we all see racism as a priority and it's a huge issue that we need to tackle...the staff themselves aren't always necessarily equipped to do that because of our own, you know, lack of training I would say.*
> — **TEACHER**

6.1.2 'Get back to where you came from': experiences of racism

When asked whether they had experienced or knew about any forms of racism at their school most students said no, although in greater numbers in Year 8 (71%) when compared with Year 11 (58%) (see Figure 3). Again, though, there were differences when analysed by ethnicity, with over half of BME students (54%) replying that they had experienced or knew about racism in their school, compared with 33% of White British students who said they had (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Student responses to whether they knew about or had experienced racism, by year group

Have you experienced or do you know about any forms of racism happening in your school?

Figure 4: Student responses to whether they knew about or had experienced racism, by ethnicity
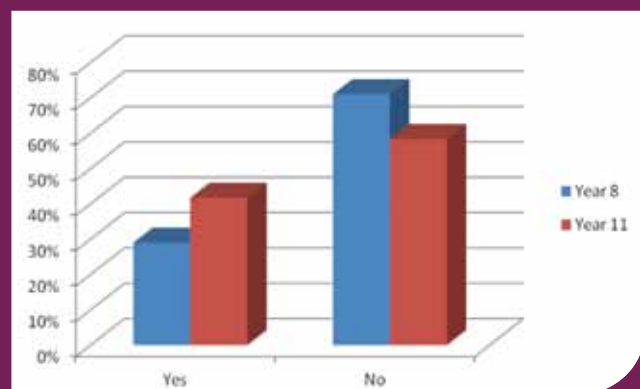
Have you experienced or do you know about any forms of racism happening in your school?

During the focus groups and ethnodrama groups most students were able to give us examples of racist incidents that they had witnessed or heard about within school. The majority of these involved the use of racist language, although a few also involved threats or physical violence.

Kids have been arguing...then one of the children has said... 'Get back to where you came from'...things like that.
— YEAR 11 STUDENT

It was only last week when this boy just went to this girl in his year 'You're Polish'...just like that, 'Just go back to your own country' for no reason.
— YEAR 11 STUDENT

However, when speaking about some of these incidents, students were often keen to downplay them. They did this by dismissing them as 'banter' between friends or, in some cases, as being the result of the BME student taking what was said 'in the wrong way'.

If it does happen it's just, like, messing about.
— YEAR 8 STUDENT

People say loads of things...they call each other gay, people call each other, like, Niggers but they don't mean it.
— YEAR 8 STUDENT

They felt that when it came to racism there was a 'line' that shouldn't be crossed. In other words, it was ok to be racist under some circumstances, such as when 'joking' with a BME friend, but not alright in others, for example if you were with someone you didn't know. They felt it wasn't always easy to know where this line was because some people were more 'sensitive' to racism than others. There

was a clear sentiment that it was acceptable to use racist terms or express racist attitudes if you 'didn't mean it'. But again, there was consternation that sometimes it got taken seriously by BME students even when you didn't mean it.

It depends who you are...If you call it [a racist name] to your best friend they wouldn't mind, but if you call it to someone you wouldn't know...they'd take it seriously.
— YEAR 8 STUDENT

Some people are more, like, touchy about being called certain things compared to other people. So if you're not, like, close to the person then they might take it in another way.
— YEAR 11 STUDENT

It's hard to sort of know who will be bothered by it and who won't. Coz you have some who take it as a joke and are quite light hearted about it, then you have others who might get really offended by it and I think some people don't know where to draw the line with the people who get offended by it.
— YEAR 11 STUDENT

It was clear that teachers were very keen to deal with all racist incidents and to give the message that racism would not be tolerated within school. However, as with the students, there was a tendency to downplay some of the incidents that had happened, perhaps through a concern not to label a young person as racist or to give credence to their assertion that racism wasn't really a problem for their school, but more to do with a lack of understanding on students' part.

Daniel * - The N Word

CASE STUDY 1

Daniel and his family came to England from a country in Africa when he was six. When he spoke to us he was fifteen and attending a high school in the Warrington Local Authority with a BME population of 4%. Amongst other things, Daniel spoke to us about the N word, how it makes him feel and his frustrations about its growing use.

A lot of people are using it [the N word], Black or White...I don't think they themselves are inherently racist but they're using racist vocabulary and they don't understand that at that moment they are being racist regardless of like, how they feel at that time. If you commit a crime regardless of your intentions you still get put in prison for it and I feel you still have to be judged, if you're using words like that, as a racist. And I've talked about this before with groups of friends and what I felt was like since they don't think that they themselves are racist they feel it's ok to use words like that which honestly it isn't.

When someone calls me the N word regardless of how they mean it, it strips away who I am as a person, it makes me feel really confined, with just this one identity being an ethnic minority. It feels altogether bad and it stays in my mind for quite a bit.

When this applies to school I feel it's starting to, through the years it's starting to really become more evident that the words are being more used... and I know every student goes through the same lessons I do - treat one another as the same way you should be treated, don't use offensive language - things like that, it's just that when I talk to school children and interact with them they don't seem to, they went to the same thing but they don't seem to understand what it actually means, which is quite annoying.

I guess since they don't really have much respect for the subject, how it makes other people feel, since it's hard to empathise with people if you've never felt that way before. Which I guess is sad, because I would love for a way to like, if there was like a special lecture or anything to proper make people understand words or statements shouldn't be used regardless of their intent...And racial identity, even though it's my identity... it's not something I want other people to be shouting about, if you know what I mean.

So just because someone says the n-word, regardless of who they are, that doesn't reflect my feelings about it at all and I feel, when I see rappers and singers, yeah sure you have artistic license, you can say whatever you want, I guess, but it's just sad to

see it become such a norm, society's become so desensitised to some words...A phrase that really annoys me nowadays is casual racism. Like how d'you mean casual? It's only a joke? Stuff like that it annoys me because you're not in a position, you can never be in an ethnic minorities' position, so you can't say it as a joke, you don't know how it feels so you can't, it's a bit annoying, yes

I mean my friends are now trying to say those words like, but I feel like I'm really uncomfortable with that word in general, if you're my friend you would understand that, so I don't think you can say well just because I'm your friend I can use the N word. I think that because you're my friend, you, of all people, shouldn't use the word, 'cos you're my friend you should know my sensibilities.

It's so much harder to say to your friend...it's much harder like to tell them to stop because you don't want them to stop being your friend or offend them...Obviously I get into an argument and it becomes this sort of tension between us...being Black and interacting with other people it's always this undercurrent of tension, which really I don't like this racial tension, which is sad to feel sometimes because you feel there's a boundary between...between a person, I can't really get to know someone.

* Daniel's name has been changed to protect his identity.

6.1.3 'They're only making themselves more vulnerable': Hyper-visibility of BME students

On occasion, there were examples of teachers seeking to explain the causes of racist incidents, or explain their difficulty in effectively dealing with them, as partly to do with the personality or 'culture' of the BME student who was the recipient of the racism.

> He's [a mixed race BME student] got his own issues with having, his mum's Black and his dad's White.
>
> — TEACHER

> We've had a Ukrainian young man in school and...he became known as 'the Ukranian boy' and it was really difficult because... there were other issues around him personally and his behaviour stood out, so whenever he was discussed [it was] 'You know, the Ukranian boy' and that's how it became known...'coz that's how he stood out. It'd be, like, you know, the lady with the red hair...I know when I've been dealing with [racism towards him], like I've not understood the cultural...how this young man and how the family...previously have managed conflict before is very different to how they would here. So there's this mentality of 'you do not tell'...and 'you sort things out yourself' and that came from his background and that's kind of impacted on school, so, which is quite alien in many ways, to how things are now in school...So in actual fact you've got the reverse...it's actually making, they're only making themselves more vulnerable.
>
> — TEACHER

These examples illustrate how sometimes fault might be found with the student who has suffered the racism, rather than with the racism present in the White British student population. The second quote also illustrates the idea of the hyper-visibility of ethnic minority students in mainly White schools. The student from Ukraine 'stood out' and was identified by his ethnicity which, perhaps, also made his behavioural issues more visible.

Simon, Alistair and Femi * - Hyper-visibility

CASE STUDY 2

Simon, Alistair and Femi were all in Year 10 when we spoke to them. Each had Black or mixed race heritage and attended a high school in the Cheshire East local authority area, with a BME population of 5%. One of the topics they spoke about was how they felt that teachers were more likely to pick up on deviations from set rules about appearance with them than with White students, because as BME students they were more visible and more scrutinised. What they said also raises questions about how rules about appearance are being implemented and whether they take different cultural norms into account.

Simon: When I first came here, I got isolation straight away. I didn't realise... Because basically, I used to have, like, these little lines in the side of my hair.

Alistair: Tramlines.

Simon: I remember coming into school and I got told off straight away and got isolation.

Femi: Well like recently I had my hair in massive plaits...it was part of my culture coz I went to Africa and so my grandma did it for me and my sister got it done too. But then when I was here they told me to take it out because it wasn't, like, legit and everything.

Alistair: I had a line once, do you remember my little line? It was right there. I don't know about culture, but...

Simon: They told you off for that.

Alistair: Yeah, they well told me off for that.

Simon: I remember seeing, I remember once, coz in the debate as well in year 7 there was another lad who got his hair done like that, but he was in the year above and I was thinking well, how comes he's allowed to do that? And then, so then that didn't really get, you know, that was left and then my mum started saying things like a lot of the White boys, for example, their hair, there was like this new style, having your hair really, really long and in your face...It was very messy and my mum was trying to say 'Well look, Simon's hair's very neat and you know, tidy and it's only one line so why couldn't we have that?' And it's just, it's just a bit strange, going back to Femi's hair, you know, it's fine, it wasn't messy it was actually really neat, it was just long and different.

Alistair: On the rules it says no extreme haircuts, but I don't think a line's very extreme.

Simon: In your planner it does say no extreme haircuts and it'll say things like no dying and things like that. However, people...

Alistair: Dye it anyway.

Simon: ...dye their hair extreme colours and get away with it. And I'm just thinking, I'm not being rude...they were White people...and I don't really see any Black people getting their hair dyed. I know it's not really likely but, I could see them getting told off straight away.

Femi: Yeah.

Simon: If I did that I would get told off straight away.

Alistair: Me too.

Simon: Definitely, because like, everyone's looking at what I'm doing and, you know.

Alistair: When I first came, on the six week's holiday before then my hair was blonde, bright blonde, all over... And then when I came back I had, like, tips, just faint little tips of blonde and then I got picked up straight on that... But again, like, please don't think I'm being rude, if that was, I think, a White person, I think they would have, you know, gone 'Right, OK', do you know what I mean?

6.2 How are schools tackling incidents of racism?

6.2.1 'It don't even get reported': Reporting racism

In all the schools we visited it was clear from speaking to the students that most thought their school took racism seriously and that they were encouraged to report any incidents. We asked students in the questionnaire if they thought their teachers saw racism as an important issue, to which the vast majority replied that they did (92 % of Year 8s and 85 % of Year 11s).

We also asked whether they felt confident about talking to their teachers about racist bullying and the majority (75 % of Year 8s and 80 % of Year 11s) said that they were (see Figure 5). When analysed by ethnicity, though, the percentage of BME pupils who said they would not be comfortable talking to a teacher (36 %) was significantly larger than the percentage of White British students who said they wouldn't (21 %) (see Figure 6). Despite this, of those who had witnessed racism, 75 % said they had not reported it.

Of the number of students who said they had reported racism, only a small majority said they were happy with the response. When asked on the questionnaire to give reasons why they might not report a racist incident, students cited this unhappiness with previous responses as a reason, alongside other factors such as being worried about the repercussions, feeling that teachers might not understand

or preferring to speak to a friend or family member. In the focus groups students were able to give more detailed accounts of why they might have been unhappy with the ways in which incidents were dealt with. These largely consisted of dissatisfaction with the use of punishment alone, which potentially caused resentment among perpetrators and left the causes of racism untouched.

> *When it happens it don't even get reported anyway and even if it did sometimes they'll just tell someone off or give 'em a detention but it won't solve the problem coz they'll just do it again coz they're not bothered.*
> — **YEAR 8 STUDENT**

> *Teachers just, like, shout at people...shout that loud that you don't listen to them...They just shout at you for two minutes and then that'll be it...I think they should make people understand why it's wrong...If you're just shouted at then you don't see, like, the problem. You're more annoyed that they're shouting at you.*
> — **YEAR 8 STUDENT**

6.2.2 'I think it's taken really seriously': Dealing with racist incidents

We asked whether students in the survey if they thought their teachers were confident in dealing with racist bullying and the majority said they thought they were (85 % of Year 8s and 73 % of Year 11s - see Figure 7). There was a difference in whether students thought teachers were confident when analysed by ethnicity, with 30 % of BME students saying they didn't think they were, compared with

Figure 5: Student confidence in talking to teachers about racist bullying, by year group
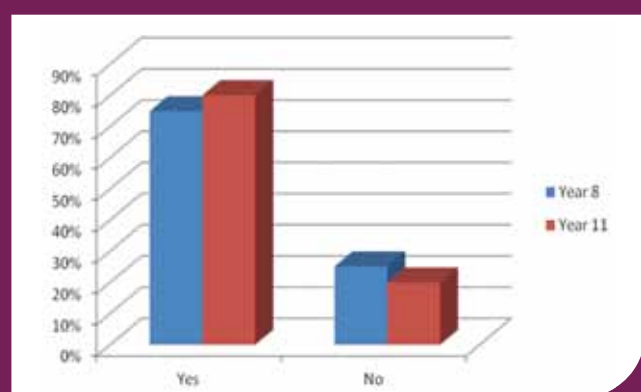
Would you feel confident in talking to teachers about racist bullying?

Figure 6: Student confidence in talking to teachers about racist bullying, by ethnicity
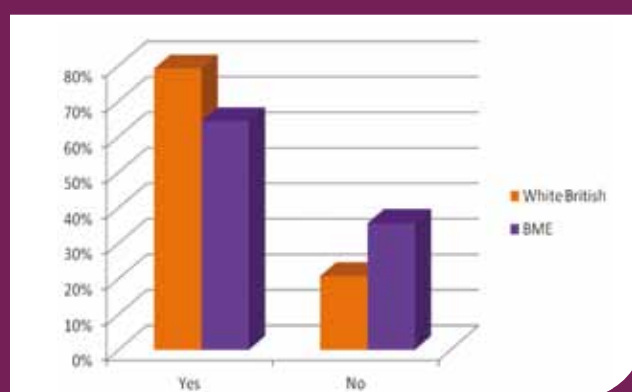
Would you feel confident in talking to teachers about racist bullying?

Figure 7: Student views on teachers' confidence in dealing with racism, by year group.

Do you think teachers are confident in dealing with racism?

20% of White British students (see Figure 8). However, these percentages are very similar to the difference between year groups when answering 'No' to these questions and so this could reflect differences in age as much as in ethnicity.

In the focus groups and ethnodrama groups, most students reflected the same sentiments, saying that they thought their teachers would take racist incidents seriously and attempt to deal with them.

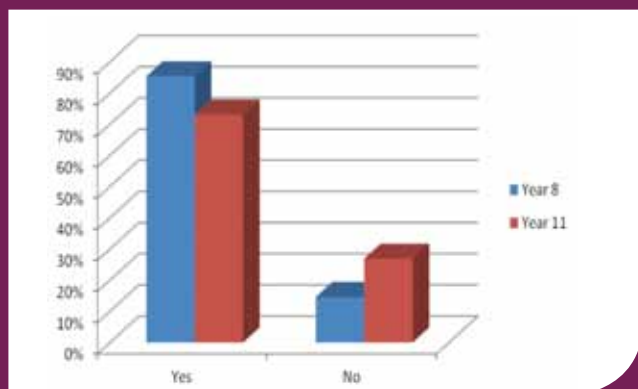> *I think the teachers think that any upset of their pupils is important, like, no matter if it's racism or not. Like, they always help with anything that happens.*
> *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

> *I think it's taken really seriously...if there's a case they'll get on it straight away.*
> *YEAR 11 STUDENT*

Despite this, there was evidence that although students think teachers will deal with racist incidents, what they do is not always able to solve the issue.

> *I think they are [confident] but I don't think they all... deal with it to be honest...I don't think they'll solve the situation.*
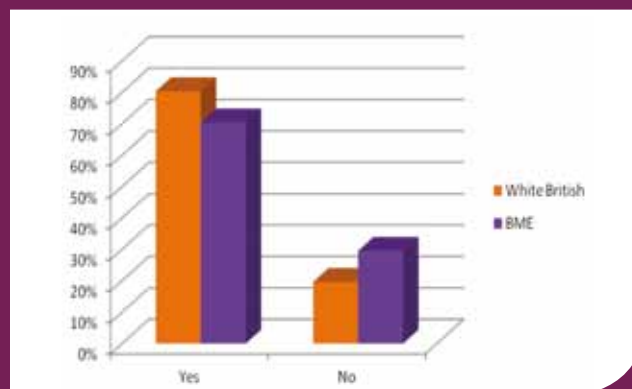> *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

Furthermore, a number of students felt that teachers don't always get the opportunity to deal with racism because it goes unreported. Some also felt that because of this, teachers don't get many opportunities to tackle it and therefore might lack experience in this area.

> *I think teachers don't really take action because they don't know about it all...I think if a teacher did find [out about] an incident, obviously they'd sort it out straight away, but they don't hear.*
> *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

Figure 8: Student views on teachers' confidence in dealing with racism, by year group.

Do you think teachers are confident in dealing with racism?

> *The teachers aren't really made aware of it because it's behind closed doors.*
> *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

> *Most of the time they don't know [how to deal with racism]. It's unusual to, like, deal with it so they've not had, like, much experience in dealing with it.*
> *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

When we spoke to the teachers about dealing with racist incidents, it was very clear that they were keen to deal with them as effectively as possible and to prevent re-occurrences. Some did this by using restorative justice techniques in order to help the perpetrator to understand what they had done and the effect it had. In the best of these examples, the recipient of the abuse was also included in the solution and was aware of what had been done to resolve the issue and prevent future occurrences.

However, the majority of accounts of how racist incidents were dealt with involved sanctions for the perpetrator, which is a good first step, but little indication of follow-up work or attempts to tackle the causes of racism on a wider basis.

> *There are a couple of different routes that can be followed. The internal exclusion route if it's considered to be a misdemeanour that needs to be punished within school...That's either detention or internal exclusion in one of the rooms, where for a day they will be sat with the Deputy Head and will have a day of work to do outside of their classroom friends, so to show them that this isn't an incident that can be ignored...If the incident is deemed serious enough it would be then a temporary exclusion from school.*
> *TEACHER*

Some teachers felt that the way their school dealt with racist incidents did prevent the individual concerned from repeating the behaviour within school, but not necessarily when outside school or when not within the earshot of teachers. This sentiment was reflected in the student focus groups.

> *I don't think it's really used in schools...people our age kind of use it outside school where there's no-one really to, like, tell them to stop it.*
> — YEAR 8 STUDENT

> *I do think racism happens a lot more on Facebook because it's not face to face and teachers can't really see what you're saying on Facebook.*
> — YEAR 8 STUDENT

Teachers also described how they sometimes lacked confidence in dealing with racist incidents, particularly as some felt under pressure decide whether or not an incident was racist at the moment that it was reported to or witnessed by them.

> *I'm not sure all teachers, I think it's on their interpretation if you like, so 'Well I don't think that's racist, so it isn't'. Whereas maybe the pupil might of felt that it was and I think that's where the training needs to happen, to sort of raising awareness about what might be racist.*
> — TEACHER

> *It says it's a racist incident if it's perceived to be by the person who's on the receiving end of it and I don't think that stands any logical analysis to be honest. You know, if I perceive I'm the King of France it doesn't make it right does it, you know? And I find that frustrating really.*
> — TEACHER

Some described how they felt the need to engage in fine grained analysis of what did or didn't constitute a racist incident in order to be sure that they were recording it correctly. This could, again, be due to lack of training, to an understandable reluctance to brand a young person as racist or perhaps due to a desire to protect the school from having to report incidents.

> *I would say the only area that could ever cause confusion in the school...is understanding the difference between indirect and direct racism...Quite often students will use a racist term or there will be a racist connotation to a conversation and...often the teachers will categorise an incident as racist when actually there's been no direct intention to be racist and kind of recording that can be misleading in some ways. We could be teaching about Islam, but what they could do is, is that we could then find a situation where they go 'Oh I'm not gonna learn about Muslims' and it's like, well is that direct racism because we have a Muslim in the room or is it an indirect racism?*
> — TEACHER

A number of teachers spoke about how they found it difficult to respond to reports of racism from students who had previously not reported the same behaviour from students who were their friends. They described how they felt these students should be consistent in their reporting, whether the racism came from a friend or not.

> *A particular boy who I dealt with, he complained about somebody saying something to him and then when we did sort of our investigation, it came out that a number of his mates had said things to him but because they were his mates, he didn't take as much offense to them as somebody who wasn't actually that pally with him.... And in a way it was sort of well you can't have it both ways, you can't sort of accuse one person of being racist towards you, when actually your mates are doing a similar thing and not accuse, you know what I mean?*
> — TEACHER

6.2.3 'It goes onto the Council records': Polices and Procedures

The majority of schools involved in our research were able to provide us with copies of their policies and procedures for dealing with racist incidents and the majority of teachers we interviewed were confident that they knew and could carry out these procedures. However, all of the teachers we spoke to had, in some way, a responsibility for racist incident reporting and recording within school. Many said that they thought colleagues who did not have this responsibility might not be aware of the process and would come to them for help and advice. This suggested there might be issues with knowledge about racism and racist incidents being confined to particular individuals within school.

As part of the survey, we asked students whether they were aware of a policy dealing with racism and racist incidents. The vast majority (66% of Year 11s and 71% of Year 8s)

were not aware of one (see Figure 9). This was reflected in a widespread confusion in their answers during the focus groups when asked if they knew what would happen to someone who was racist at school.

> *If...something racist happens in school and you do actually go up to the teacher...straight after it's said it... goes onto...the Council records and stuff. It's in...their records [the perpetrator] for...the rest of their life and stuff. So whenever they get a job it's there.*
> ──────── *YEAR 8 STUDENT* ────────

> *Probably get suspended...or maybe expelled. I dunno, like, it depends what you've done I suppose but... your parents are supposed to come in for a meeting or whatever, but I don't know whether that goes on or not.*
> ──────── *YEAR 11 STUDENT* ────────

6.2.4 'We have global week': Racism on the curriculum

The majority of students (63 % of Year 11s and 69 % of Year 8s) responded positively when asked whether they learn about racism and anti-racism in school (see Figure 11). However, when asked whether they felt they had learnt anything useful from this only a small majority of White British stundents (53 %) and a minority of BME students (47 %) felt they had learnt something from this. When asked about the lessons in which they learnt this, the most popular responses were RE, PSHE, Citizenship, English and History.

When we asked teachers about how anti-racism was taught within school, most cited lessons within PSHE, Citizenship, History and English as being where this took place. Some teachers outlined how they utilised opportunities within the National Curriculum to discuss racism, such as when learning about slavery in History, or to discuss multiculturalism, such as when learning about difference religions in RE. There were few indications of a joined up approach to teaching about race and racism via the curriculum within the schools and similarly few examples of anti-racist education in the form of teaching about contemporary racism in the UK.

Most ways of teaching involved historical examples of racism, examples of racism that had taken place in countries other than the UK or the use of multicultural education as a way of celebrating diversity. Some schools also spoke about special one off events, such as off-timetable weeks where they would focus on issues including racism, or weeks which focussed on learning about particular countries such as India. There were few examples of anti-racist education, though, which sought to engender understanding and debate about structural inequalities and discrimination.

> *[In] Year 8 we've done a unit about immigration, so we've looked at why do people come and go?...We look at the Norman conquests...we looked at the Windrush and we looked at why people left, so why people went to America as one unit...We've looked at slavery, so we followed that with the Black peoples of the Americas and then we look at rights, so we've looked at the Holocaust... and we compared the treatment of the Black Americans in America with the treatment of the Black and mixed race people in South Africa in Apartheid.*
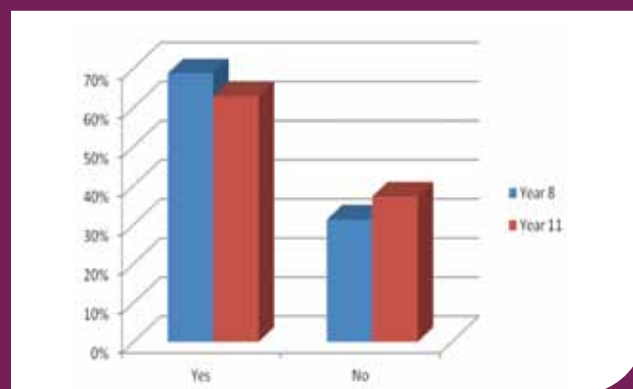> ──────── *TEACHER* ────────

Figure 9: Student awareness of a school policy dealing with racism and racist incidents, by year group.
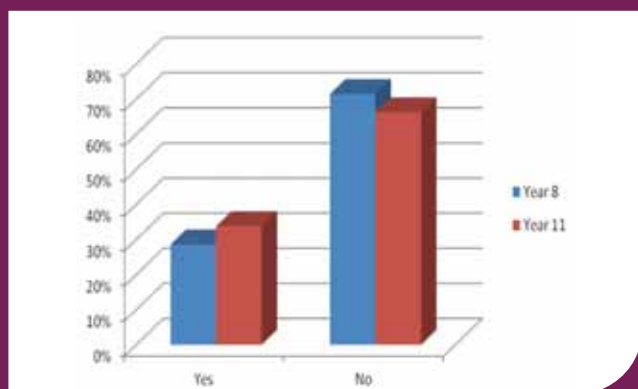
Do you know about any policy in school dealing with racism and racist incidents?

Figure 10: Student response to learning about racism and anti-racism in school, by year group

Do you learn about racism and anti-racism in school?

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> *The way we cover it, is that we have dedicated time... We'll have, like, global week, and then we'll have people visit...African drummers, you know. We'll have some cuisine, we'll have maybe cinema, you know, so we cover a bit of culture in that way...It's looking at the culture and seeing does that have anything we think we like in it?...The simplest one is food and the kids do enjoy it. We have curry here and they all love it but they can't make the link and see well actually we do like that culture, if for no other reason [than] because the food's great.*
>
> — *TEACHER*

When we spoke to the students in the focus groups and ethnodrama groups about what they had learnt, very few spoke about racism as existing in the UK and still less about it as existing here today in systematic ways. They had learnt that racism can be structural and systematic, as in Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa, but did not have an understanding of the ways in which it operates institutionally in the UK today, nor about the multiple forms of inequality and discrimination experienced by ethnic minorities. Some students had also constructed very fixed and stereotypical understandings of people from ethnic minorities and the culture and ways of life in other countries.

> *You hear about the slave trade, so that's sort of, I think that was the origin...Then as that went away with Abraham Lincoln and all the Americans...and then Nazi Germany sort of brought it back in and then it's sort of on the way back away now.*
>
> — *YEAR 11 STUDENT*

> *Not many people are actually, like, discriminated, it's just the one off few places where they still believe White people are more in charge.*
>
> — *YEAR 11 STUDENT*

> *So if you look back then there were really serious cases of it and now there are only...minor things.*
>
> — *YEAR 11 STUDENT*

> *You learn about the slums and that, like, in India.*
>
> — *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

One teacher spoke about how in his school they had picked up on a high number of anti-Semitic racist incidents and decided to use Holocaust education to try and combat it.

> *What we found was...we had quite a high percentage of racist incidents forms that were filled in and...a high percentage of them were anti-Semitic...What we did within school was we moved up a lot of the Holocaust education, we made a really big thing of it...particularly within the RE subject, they started teaching modules on Judaism and since then I mean we haven't had one recorded issue of any anti-Semitic kind so it shows the difference that can be made by making a big focus... Now what we've found since...is that it's very much an anti-Muslim sentiment within school......We were talking the other day about how that's decreased [anti-Semitism], but how a lot more, like, racism towards, you know, Black people and Asian has kind of crept up a little bit more as the, coz obviously I mean there's no anti-Semitic at all.*
>
> — *TEACHER*

Whilst his account suggests success in tackling one form of racism, it appears that this approach did not have the overall effect of reducing racism, just shifted the expression of racist attitudes away from anti-Semitism and towards other groups.

> ***Student 1:*** *You know Bin Laden being killed? That was everywhere...and I know this is really awful... When you see people...who have that kind of...with the headscarves, dark coloured [skin], the beard...you just stereotype straight away...I'm not a racist person but you just see them and think 'Oh, just stay away'. And most of the time obviously they're not going to be a terrorist...And it's not trying to be mean, it's just the way we see things.*
>
> ***Student 2:*** *Yeah, like [an Indian restaurant] or something...when you go there they're all like... sharpening knives going (adopts accent) 'Ahhh, dinner' (laughter from group)....And you think they're gonna, like...poison you or something.*
>
> — *YEAR 8 STUDENTS*

6.2.5   'You just keep your mouth shut': Discussing race and racism

Students in nearly all the focus groups and ethnodrama groups said they were confused about the terminology to use when discussing race and racism and some were not aware of the connotations of some racist terms.

> *When you're trying to describe somebody and they are, like, coloured, well you don't really know what word to use 'coz you don't know what they will feel is racist and what isn't. Because I used to think they got really offended if you called them, like, Black so I used to, when I was trying to describe someone...I used to say coloured. But then some people say they...prefer Black. But you don't really know...so it's hard to describe them in one way.*
>
> ———————— *YEAR 8 STUDENT* ————————

> *I don't think it [Paki] is that racist because it's like, in Liverpool there's a shop that we call the Paki shop, but they don't get offended by it.*
>
> ———————— *YEAR 8 STUDENT* ————————

A number of teachers also voiced how they thought that either they or their colleagues might not be confident in opening up discussions about racism in the classroom, either because they did not feel knowledgeable enough themselves to do this, were worried about 'saying the wrong thing' and being accused of racism or were concerned that some of the students might express inappropriate views that they would find it difficult to challenge.

> *I can't speak for all staff but I would hope that any member of staff would tackle. But unfortunately sometimes it can be a bit easy to pretend you haven't heard things. You know, and I think sometimes that quite possibly does happen…Some members of staff feel really uncomfortable discussing many things that's just not their subject, you know…most of us are tutors but can't handle, you know, like the Personal Development sessions because they don't do discussion and they don't do, you know, issues and feelings and so on, and it can be a real trauma. So I can imagine that some members of staff might well not hear, should I say.*
>
> ———————— *TEACHER* ————————

There were also examples of how teachers had sometimes struggled in exchanges with students when racist sentiments had been voiced during a lesson.

> *We've been doing Black peoples of the Americas with year eights and we had Barak Obama and this lad said 'Well he's not really, he shouldn't really be President Miss coz he's half caste', 'That's not a term that you can use', 'Well why not, what's the matter? That's what he is.' 'But that's not a term, he's mixed race, that's the term that you need to use. 'Well why do I need to use that term?' So we had this conversation and I think well I think I'm reasonably sort of au fait with what it is, but he didn't want to back down about that. But I think sometimes, you know, for other members of staff who perhaps haven't, where do you draw the line between what is racist?*
>
> ———————— *TEACHER* ————————

Students seemed to have picked up on some teachers' desire not to discuss racism, whilst others expressed similar sentiments about not wanting to offend and therefore steering clear of discussions about race and racism.

> *If there was more racism that happened in our year [the teachers would] want to talk about it more to get the point across. But coz it doesn't really happen I don't think they feel the need to talk about it with us that much.*
>
> ———————— *YEAR 11 STUDENT* ————————

> *I think most teachers wouldn't talk about it unless they absolutely had to coz they wouldn't want to offend.*
>
> ———————— *YEAR 8 STUDENT* ————————

> *If you just keep your mouth shut and don't say any of it then you can't really go wrong.*
>
> ———————— *YEAR 11 STUDENT* ————————

> *It's a case of not knowing whether something you say will offend someone or not.*
>
> ———————— *YEAR 11 STUDENT* ————————

> *Like when we had that 'My England' [a film about racism in England] nobody said anything and the teachers were like 'You can feel comfortable saying anything' but you don't want to say anything just in case...there's somebody who will get offended by it.*
>
> ———————— *YEAR 11 STUDENT* ————————

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Simon, Alistair and Femi - In the Classroom

Alistair: It's like, when we were in English. Did you do 'To Kill a Mockingbird' in English?

Simon: Yeah, that was a bit awkward.

Femi: Yeah, they were all looking at you like...

Alistair: Yeah, how awkward that makes us feel when they say the word nigger everyone looks at you...And they don't understand how it makes you feel. They're kinda looking at you as in 'That relates to you mate', you know what I mean? So you're there like, trying to just bury your head in the book like.

Interviewer: So before you began the book did the teacher say anything about...

Alistair: No.

Simon: No. Coz I read the book, like, twice, like, two years ago, but. And while we were reading it I was thinking 'Oh no, how awkward is this going to be when we do it in class?'

Alistair: Yeah and it was.

Simon: I remember the day when he told us, I was thinking 'Mmmm' and every time he asked me to read I was like 'I don't really want to read, I'm OK thanks', you know.

Alistair: No I read, I just, when it said nigger I didn't say it.

Simon: And it was strange and I remember when the teacher said it, he would quiet down just a tiny bit and I'd be thinking 'It's a book, just leave it, it's fine!' You know, it's in there for a reason.

Femi: I thought it was a bit awkward as well...Coz when my teacher was reading it and she went on to palm oil or something and about how, I can't remember her name, was doing something with palm oil and making plantain or something and Miss went straight to me and said 'Have you ever had plantain?' and I was like 'Errrr'.......

Alistair: I remember last year in English, when we were doing that dialect and all that, I forgot about it but (laughs). He [the teacher] used me as the example, coz I was the only Black person in our set, and he used me as the example, like 'Alistair for instance uses a much different language to us because he's Black'. [Alistair was born and bred in Manchester and has a Manchester accent].

Interviewer: Is that what he said?

Alistair: Yeah. He didn't mean it in a, you know...

Simon: In an offensive way.

Alistair: ...offensive way but he doesn't understand how I feel. I feel, not embarrassed, but a bit, like, please don't do that.

Simon: It's awkward but it's just

Alistair: Yeah, it's just dead awkward.

Simon: You don't know how to react to it. If you react

Alistair: If you act, react in a...

Simon: In a big way.

Alistair: ...in a big way, everyone's like 'Ohhh, isn't he a bit of a "beep"'.

Simon: They'd be like 'Calm down, calm down, why are you acting like that?' and you'd get in trouble as well, whereas...

Alistair: But if you, and then if you acted in, like, a laughing way...

Femi: Then they'll think it's OK.

Alistair: Then they think it's OK, so you kinda like...

Simon: Then you think that point's not been put across to you has it? If you laugh it's not been, you've not, like, told, coz you can't exactly tell them, you can't say that...

Alistair: It's like you've gotta just try and pretend you didn't hear it, like 'What?'

6.3 What kind of strategies do pupils and teachers think could be employed to help deal with racism and racist incidents?

The main way in which teachers thought dealing with racism and racist incidents could be improved was through staff training, not only on how to deal with racist incidents, but also on their context and the multiple ways in which racism is present in society and how this permeates into school.

Students, meanwhile, were very clear about two things. Firstly, that they want to talk openly about and have discussions on race and racism. Secondly, that they want to be equipped with the tools and terminology to enable them to have these discussions in a safe environment without fear of offending anyone or being accused of racism. They also spoke about how they felt it was important for White British students to understand the context of race and racism, why it is important and why it is so damaging.

I don't think it's covered very well though and I think more should be done to raise awareness about it, like classes dedicated to racism in some of the lessons.

— *YEAR 11 STUDENT*

I would probably teach about...not only the feelings but... why it's so disgraceful, like, to say, like, racist things. Make them understand what they're actually saying, so they're not just saying it. You'd tell them, like, that it's wrong obviously and then tell them why it's so, like, wrong.

— *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

You could teach them about...how offensive it is to, say if you're a White person, you don't know how offensive it is to someone.

— *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

Well maybe they [teachers] should just talk about it more...Some people are just scared to talk about it... It's that whole thing with being , you know, PC about it and, like, you can't say this and you can't say that. Then people are, like, don't know...how far they can go by saying things and people are just uncomfortable.

— *YEAR 11 STUDENT*

I'd do like a little intro on what racism is and then I'd kind of make a few people do an example...and see how they felt and we'd do a class discussion on each person's views.

— *YEAR 8 STUDENT*

7 Conclusions

- Many of our findings corroborate previous research in mainly White areas.

- There was a perception among teachers and students that racism is not really an issue in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington secondary schools because of the low numbers of BME pupils and relatively low numbers of recorded incidents.

- This perception is at odds with accounts of everyday racisms existing within schools and with the accounts given by BME students.

- These everyday racisms tend to be normalised and remain invisible. The ways in which racism is understood plays a part in maintaining this invisibility.

- An over-reliance on measuring and responding to racism via the numbers of recorded racist incidents also helped to maintain this invisibility. Most students did not report incidents.

- Teachers were committed to tackling racism where they did recognise it and there were examples of good practice in dealing with racist incidents. However, there were some examples where limited responses to racism had only taught students not to voice racism within the presence of teachers or that only certain BME groups should not be the target of racism.

- Racism was mainly framed by both teachers and students as being about the actions of individuals who are either exhibiting aberrant behaviour or do not really understand the impact of their words or actions. There was little evidence of consideration of the systemic ways in which inequality and discrimination are present and how the words and actions of individuals are shaped by this context.

- Teachers and students had tendencies to downplay racist incidents and lay the blame partly with the students who were the recipients of racism.

- Teachers were hampered in understanding, recognising and confidently dealing with racism by a lack of training.

- Schools were using opportunities within the National Curriculum to teach about racism, multiculturalism and limited forms of anti-racism. The majority of students were aware of these opportunities, but only a small minority felt they had learnt anything from them.

- There was little evidence of whole school approaches to anti-racism being utilised, nor of critical anti-racism being implemented on the curriculum. Multicultural education was heavily relied upon.

- Some forms of teaching about racism appeared to lead students to understand it as an historical or foreign concept, or as being mainly present only in extreme forms. Other forms of teaching led to it being conceptualised as about rights and respect and being confined to issues about bullying.

- Stereotypical understandings of other cultures were in evidence among both staff and students.

- The requirement to respond to and record racist incidents appeared to force some teachers into making fine grained analyses of situations in order to decide whether or not they were racist before responding to them.

- Many students were confused about what did and didn't constitute racism and the appropriate language to use when discussing it.

- Students and teachers spoke about a reluctance to discuss racism due to a fear of not wanting to offend. Pupils were aware that some teachers have more confidence in talking about and dealing with racism than others.

- There were examples of BME students being hyper-visible and their behaviour being subjected to closer scrutiny as a result.

8 Recommendations

Whole school

8.1 Schools' desire to take racism seriously should be capitalised upon. However, they must address racism in all its forms, including institutional and everyday racism. This can best be achieved via a whole school approach to race equality and it is important that school leaders publically signal their commitment to this.

8.2 A whole school approach to race equality is not only beneficial to the BME students but to the student body as a whole, since they will be better prepared for their future lives in a diverse and globalised society. These benefits must be made clear to schools.

8.3 Schools should see responding to racist incidents as only one of the ways in which racism can be tackled, rather than the principle way. They should be given support to develop a wider range of tools to do this.

8.4 Responses to racist incidents should be viewed as opportunities for measures to be put in place that go beyond restoring the status quo and towards transformative actions that involve the whole school community.

8.5 The recording and reporting of racist incidents can be used as one measure of racism, but schools need be made aware of the problems with using this as the main measure and shown alternatives.

8.6 A focus on the presence of BME students as the catalyst for racism should be switched to a focus on the ways in which racist discourses are present at all times, regardless of the presence or otherwise of BME groups and individuals.

8.7 Schools need to become aware of how BME pupils in mainly white areas can become hyper-visible and their behaviour scrutinised. This focus should instead be directed towards the currently invisible forms of racism these students are experiencing.

School Leadership

8.8 School leaders should be clear about their commitment to a whole school approach to race equality at all times and support their staff in delivering this.

8.9 School leaders should attend refresher training on the Equality Act 2010 and their schools' legal obligations under the Act.

8.10 School leaders should also be supported to complete Equality Impact Assessments on all school policies, to ensure their impact on all pupils has been fully considered.

School Staff

8.11 All school staff should receive training on racism and anti-racism. For reasons of practicality, a cascade approach should be adopted in which race equality 'champions' attend face-to-face training and then become responsible for supporting other staff to complete online training.

8.12 Staff should actively seek out opportunities to address race equality via the curriculum across all subject areas. They should be given support to do this in the form of resources.

8.13 Staff should to go beyond the curriculum and build on the good examples of attempts to address race equality in cross curricular ways, for example via the use of off-timetable weeks. Again, support in the form of resources should be made available.

Staff and Students

8.14 Both staff and pupils need support in re-conceptualising their understanding of race and racism, towards an appreciation of how it operates in structural and systemic ways, rather than just through individual acts or extreme groups. They should resist attempts to downplay racist discourse and to understand that lack of intent is not a defence. Myth-busting about race and racism should be included in these re-conceptualisations.

8.15 Staff and pupils are concerned about labelling others as racist when attempting to challenge racism. They should therefore be supported and to adopt methods to challenge the discriminatory attitudes or behaviour, rather than the person.

8.16 Schools should develop joint learning initiatives around race and racism. Goals and learning objectives are set by consensus with students, guided by teachers and sharing practical experience with peers is encouraged and facilitated. This approach enables both teachers and students to develop confidence in discussing these subjects within a safe environment.

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