



**NASUWT**  
The Teachers' Union



**ANTI-RACISM AND DECOLONISING  
THE CURRICULUM**  
A framework to support action

## Background

In April 2021, the NASUWT's National Conference passed a resolution calling on the Union's National Executive to take action to decolonise the curriculum. This included four broad actions:

1. work with campaigners to press for inclusive curriculum frameworks and entitlements;
2. publish materials and resources on decolonising the curriculum;
3. lobby governments and administrations to secure inclusive curricular entitlements; and
4. engage with teacher training providers to embed anti-racist teaching.

This framework forms part of our response to that resolution and has been developed to support teachers and school leaders to decolonise the curriculum as part of anti-racist practice in their schools. It also aims to be a useful tool for NASUWT activists campaigning and bargaining for action on decolonising the curriculum and anti-racist practice. Further, it is intended to support activists to engage with all members and improve representation through our structures.

The framework is available as a web-based resource at [www.nasuwt.org.uk/DecolonisingTheCurriculum](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/DecolonisingTheCurriculum). This includes links to resources which may help teachers and leaders to take action to decolonise the curriculum as part of an anti-racist approach. We plan to add to these resources as the work is taken forward.

## The NASUWT's position on anti-racism and decolonising the curriculum

We are committed to anti-racism and to challenging the hostile racist environment that NASUWT members face. Decolonising the curriculum forms part of that work.

We recognise that both the formal and informal curriculum contribute to what is taught and learned about identities, culture, racism, prejudice and hatred, rights and respect and equality of opportunity. The formal and the informal curriculum have vital roles to play in creating inclusive schools and an inclusive society.

The experiences of Black<sup>1</sup> learners and Black teachers and leaders cannot be treated in isolation from wider school organisation and the curriculum. The curriculum, along with school policies, procedures and practices, have critical roles to play in tackling and preventing discrimination and segregation, advancing equality and fostering good relations between learners and staff with different protected characteristics.

We recognise that the injustices of today have their roots in the injustices of the past, and decisions and actions taken today have implications for justice and injustice. We believe that action to decolonise the curriculum must start with creating the conditions for a decolonised anti-racist education to exist and flourish.

## Principles guiding the NASUWT's approach to decolonising the curriculum

Our commitment to decolonising the curriculum is underpinned by 'six Rs':

1. **Reality:** This includes the content of the formal and the hidden curriculum, and being clear about how it operates to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others, including learners and staff.
2. **Racial literacy:** There is not only a need to recognise diversity, but also to be determinedly anti-racist in approach; to foster critical thinking and democratic school communities; and to equip all teachers with critical knowledge, understanding and pedagogic skills.
3. **Representation including of Black teachers:** Who is represented in the workforce and how are they positioned, recognised and valued? There is a need to be ambitious and to have a teacher workforce that reflects and represents learners and the community at all levels. There is also a need to ensure that Black teachers, learners and communities are able to contribute meaningfully to the life of the school.
4. **Role leadership:** Anti-racist education must not be left on the shoulders of Black teachers. All teachers need to be supported and developed with the skills, competence and confidence to take forward an effective curriculum approach. This has to start at the top with effective leadership and management. There is a need to provide leadership training and development.

---

<sup>1</sup> The NASUWT uses the term Black in a political and inclusive sense to describe those who self-identify as African, Caribbean and Asian identities, and those with a common and direct history of racism, racist oppression and diminished opportunities in today's society.

5. **Rights of teachers and learners:** How teachers are treated impacts directly on the lessons learned by learners. Therefore, it is vital that all teachers have the space to be heard and listened to. A decolonised curriculum experience also includes being critically aware of the experiences and outcomes of Black learners and the implications for children's safeguarding.
6. **Redress and reparation:** Given the continuing impacts of social and economic injustice, racism and discrimination, the school must be deliberate in its approach to tackling inequality and advancing equality for those who suffer disadvantage, including through the curriculum.

### **Colonisation and decolonising**

'Colonisation' describes the ongoing process where one group of people takes control of another group of people. Decolonising:

- recognises that colonialism, imperialism and racism have impacted on and shaped political, economic and social structures and institutions in the UK, and that curricula reflect and reinforce this colonial, imperial and racist past;
- interrogates assumed knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices, and seeks to broaden perspectives. This includes incorporating the views, perspectives and experiences of those who are, or have been, marginalised or oppressed;
- involves supporting learners to think critically about evidence, equality, rights and justice and to challenge discrimination, disadvantage and injustice; and
- requires action to ensure that the school environment values and empowers all learners and staff, and does not disadvantage or exclude some groups.

### **Decolonising the curriculum: what and how?**

In simple terms, decolonising the curriculum is a process that involves addressing two key questions:

- What should be taught? This includes curriculum content and sources of knowledge.
- How should the curriculum be taught? This includes consideration of how content and knowledge are critiqued, as well as wider considerations about pedagogy.

Decolonising the curriculum involves looking at representation across the whole curriculum. It also involves helping learners to understand and engage with issues of representation, rights, power, equality, inclusion and justice.

The following questions are intended to help teachers and leaders to reflect on the current curriculum and the changes they need to make. It is important to recognise that decolonising is an ongoing process. Therefore, teachers and leaders may find it useful to return to these questions periodically.

1. What are the dominant narratives and perspectives saying and what do they ignore or omit?
  - a. To what extent does the curriculum content reflect Western, European, white and male perspectives?
  - b. To what extent does the curriculum include the knowledge, ideas, experiences and perspectives of Black and marginalised people in the UK and globally?
2. How do you encourage and support learners to think critically about evidence, sources of knowledge, representation and power relationships?
  - a. How are learners encouraged and supported to think critically about matters relating to equality/inequality, justice/injustice, inclusion/exclusion and marginalisation?
  - b. How are learners' backgrounds, experiences and perspectives used to help explore issues relating to representation, equality, rights, justice and inclusion?
3. What steps can you take to include the knowledge, ideas, experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged and marginalised people and communities?
4. What further steps can you take to support learners to think critically about evidence, representation, equality and power relationships, and to take action to challenge discrimination and injustice?

### **A whole-school approach to anti-racism and decolonising the curriculum**

Action to decolonise the curriculum should form part of a whole-school approach to tackling racism, discrimination and injustice. This includes recognising the intersectional nature of colonisation, discrimination and oppression.

The following questions are intended to help leaders, teachers and NASUWT Representatives to reflect on whether the school provides the environment for anti-racist and anti-discriminatory education and decolonising the curriculum to flourish.

### **Leadership of the curriculum**

1. How are representation and matters related to equality, rights, justice and inclusion addressed across the whole-school curriculum?
  - a. Is this reflected clearly in curriculum aims, purposes and intent?
  - b. How do the views and perspectives of Black teachers, learners and communities feed into and inform decisions about the curriculum?
  - c. Does the curriculum equip learners with the knowledge, skills and competencies that they need to think critically about representation and diversity, to challenge discrimination and injustice and to act fairly and justly?
2. How do different subjects/themes contribute to the vision for representation, equality, rights, justice and inclusion?
  - a. Are there cross-disciplinary knowledge, skills and competencies that need to be planned into and across subjects/themes?
  - b. How are teachers made aware of the cross-disciplinary requirements and expectations?
3. What are the barriers to teaching a curriculum that is representative of different knowledge and perspectives, which equips learners to think critically and take action to challenge, discrimination and injustice, and how can they be overcome?
4. What action should be taken to strengthen representation and the teaching of equality, rights, justice and inclusion across the curriculum?

### **Staff development and support**

1. How are teachers supported and developed to address representation and matters related to equality, rights justice and inclusion through their teaching?
  - a. Do all teachers and leaders receive training and support?
  - b. What support is provided to new and early career teachers?
  - c. Are teachers encouraged and supported to work collaboratively and to share knowledge, ideas and plans?
2. How does the school secure and protect the wellbeing of all teachers and staff?
  - a. What steps are taken to identify issues arising from curriculum content and representation (e.g. racist content in set texts) that may have an adverse impact on the wellbeing of Black teachers?
  - b. What steps are taken to promote the wellbeing of Black teachers in respect of matters related to representation, equality and inclusion?

### **Culture, ethos and engagement**

1. Do the school's ethos and values make it clear that the school is committed to advancing equality, tackling and eradicating racism, discrimination and injustice, and ensuring that the school is welcoming to all?
  - a. Is it clear that all members of the school community are responsible for creating an environment that is inclusive and welcoming to all?
  - b. Is it clear that all members of the school community have responsibilities to challenge racism, discrimination and injustice?
  - c. Does feedback from Black learners and Black staff indicate that the school's ethos and values are operating in practice?
2. How do school policies, procedures and practices support the school to decolonise the curriculum?
  - a. Does the behaviour policy make explicit reference to proactively identifying and tackling racism, harassment and discrimination, promoting equality, and fostering good relations between groups?
  - b. Does the school record and monitor all incidents to identify issues, patterns and trends, and does it act promptly to address issues that are identified?
3. How does the school engage with parents and communities on matters relating to equality, justice and rights?

- a. Does the school make its position on equality, justice and rights clear to parents and does this make it clear that racism, discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated?
- b. How are Black parents and communities supported and encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school and how does the school identify and take account of the experiences and views of Black parents and communities?
- c. Does the school seek the support and expertise of community organisations in decolonising the curriculum and wider work to tackle racism, inequality and injustice?

### **Evaluating impact**

1. How does the school assess and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its work to decolonise the curriculum, tackle racism, discrimination and injustice, and promote equality and inclusion?
  - a. Do Black teachers and learners feel included and valued, including as members of school, staff and learner communities?
  - b. Is the NASUWT consulted as part of the evaluation process?
2. How do the results of evaluations inform plans and decisions about the content of the curriculum, how the curriculum is taught, staff development and support, the involvement of Black teachers, learners and communities, and the leadership and management of equality, diversity and inclusion?
3. What steps should be taken to strengthen the school's work to challenge discrimination and injustice, improve representation, and secure equality and inclusion?



**NASUWT**  
The Teachers' Union

[www.nasuw.org.uk](http://www.nasuw.org.uk)