



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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27 July 2020

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for the letter of 10 June, from you and other colleagues, asking the Department to commit to a review of the UK's history curriculum by leading historians and advocates from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. As you will appreciate, my reply covers England only as education is a devolved matter.

I agree strongly that there is no place for racism in our society or in our education system, and that education plays a vital role in helping people understand and tackle inequality. The Department for Education is committed to an inclusive education system which recognises and embraces diversity and supports all pupils and students to tackle racism and have the knowledge and tools to do so.

In terms of the national curriculum, it may help if I clarify that the curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out *how* curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught. The Department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach.

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and this can include the voices and experience of Black and minority ethnic people. The flexibility within the history curriculum means that there is the opportunity for teachers to teach about Black and minority ethnic history across the spectrum of themes and eras set out in the curriculum. I have set out below some examples from the curriculum, but the teaching of Black and minority ethnic history need not be limited to these examples:

- In Key Stage 1 – key historical events within or beyond living memory; the lives of key Black historical figures such as Mary Seacole and Rosa Parks or others.
- In Key Stage 2 – the achievements of the earliest civilizations – an

overview of where and when the first civilizations appeared and a depth study of one of the following: Ancient Sumer, The Indus Valley, Ancient Egypt, The Shang Dynasty of Ancient China; and a study of a non-European society that provides contrasts with British history, we give as examples an early Islamic civilization, including a study of Baghdad c. AD 900; Mayan civilization c. AD 900; and Benin (West Africa) c. AD 900-1300.

- In Key Stage 3 – we give an example of a more in-depth study on the impact through time of the migration of people to, from and within the British Isles. This Key Stage also includes examples of the development and end of the British Empire and Britain's transatlantic slave trade, its effects and its eventual abolition; and the requirement to teach at least one study of a significant society or issue in world history and its interconnections with other world developments.
- Additionally, local history is an element across key stages.

Black and minority ethnic history can be taught across many of the themes of the history curriculum by reflecting the contribution of Black and minority ethnic people across the ages in the UK and more widely. In terms of the Black community, this can include historical examples of Black Romans, Tudors, Stuarts, Georgians and Victorians, and of course extend to other minority ethnic groups. It can also include the role of the countries of the former British Empire in both world wars, and the part Black and minority ethnic people have played in shaping the UK in the 20th Century. I believe there is clear scope to teach the shared history we have.

The Department has discussed Black and minority ethnic history with a number of organisations and we welcome the profile given to the importance of teaching Black and minority ethnic history by a range of groups and individuals, and the support and resources on teaching they provide direct to teachers. We have no plans for a review of the National Curriculum, but we will continue to explore what more we can do to support the teaching of Black and minority ethnic history and welcome the perspectives of committed individuals and groups, building on previous discussions.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Gibb', written in a cursive style.

Rt. Hon. Nick Gibb MP
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