

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee**Petition Number:** [PE1813](#) and [PE1814](#)**Main Petitioners:**

PE1813 – Eunice Olumide

PE1814 – Tobe Amamize

Subjects:*PE1813*

Reform the national curriculum to include all African Scottish history.

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reform the national curriculum to include Afro-Scottish history including artefacts of African diaspora, cultural and economic contributions, the role of the British Empire and the benefits to Scotland from colonies of the Caribbean and Africa.

PE1814

Compulsory education of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic history in Scottish schools

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to embed Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) history into the school curriculum.

Introduction

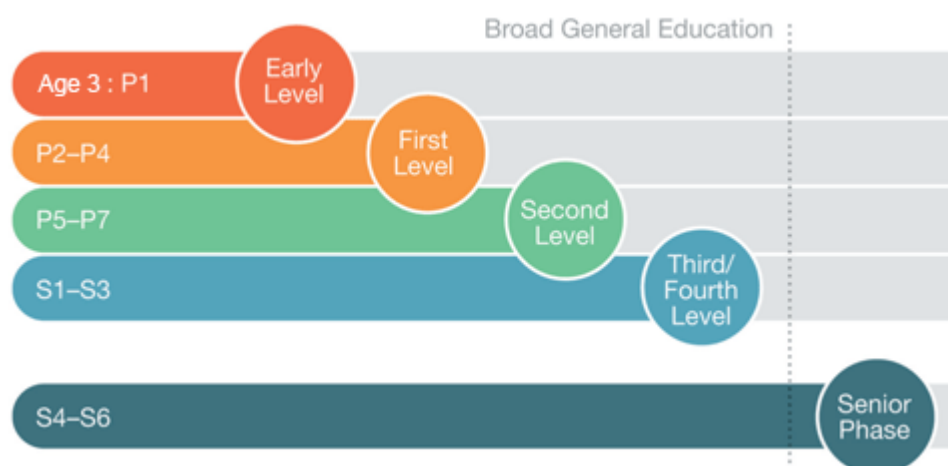
This briefing covers two petitions lodged on the same subject: the inclusion of the history of black and minority ethnic people in the taught school curriculum.

Curriculum for Excellence

Very little of the school curriculum is statutory in Scotland. The non-statutory Curriculum for Excellence (“CfE”) is intended to be an outcomes-based approach whereby education authorities and schools have autonomy on what is taught and how. This is supported by guidance produced by Education Scotland.

CfE is organised by levels. Within Broad General Education – from early years to the end of S3 – there are five levels. The diagram below shows how these might be expected to map on to different years of schooling. It is important to note that the diagram is illustrative, and learners will progress at their own pace through the curriculum levels. Senior Phase is the final part of schooling where pupils have the opportunity to gain qualifications, for example in History.

Figure 1: CfE levels



CfE also include curriculum areas. Within these are listed Experiences and Outcomes (“Es and Os”) and Benchmarks. Es and Os are statements about children’s learning and progression and Benchmarks are intended to set out national standards expected within each curriculum area at each level. Curriculum areas do not necessarily map onto traditional subjects; the Es and Os associated with history can be found within *Social Studies*.

[The Es and Os document](#) for Social Studies sets out 10 broad outcomes, several of which are relevant to these petitions—

- develop my understanding of the history, heritage and culture of Scotland, and an appreciation of my local and national heritage within the world
- broaden my understanding of the world by learning about human activities and achievements in the past and present
- develop my understanding of my own values, beliefs and cultures and those of others
- learn how to locate, explore and link periods, people and events in time and place.

More detail on learning history is included in the “Curriculum Organiser” called “People, past events and societies”. Within this are contained the Es and Os, which are placed against the different CfE levels. Here are two examples of the Es and Os:

In the third level:

I can explain the similarities and differences between the lifestyles, values and attitudes of people in the past by comparing Scotland with a society in Europe or elsewhere. SOC 3-04a

And in the fourth level (although not everyone will be expected to reach the fourth level within BGE):

I have investigated a meeting of cultures in the past and can analyse the impact on the societies involved. SOC 4-05c

The benchmarks provide examples of what a pupil would be able to do when they have mastered a particular level in a curriculum area. These can be more specific, but they are examples – a child is not expected to meet all the benchmarks. [Guidance states](#)—

“It is not necessary for learners to demonstrate mastery of every individual aspect of learning within Benchmarks at a particular level and before moving on to the next level. However, it is important that there are no major gaps in children’s and young people’s learning when looking across the major organisers in each curriculum area.”

Looking only at the third and fourth levels in the “People, past events and societies” the third and fourth levels, this includes:

Level 3 includes:

- Provides at least two simple explanations as to why a group of people from beyond Scotland settled here.
- Describes at least two impacts immigrants have had on life and culture of Scotland.
- Provides at least two valid opinions about the impact on people’s lives of a major social economic or social change in the past.

Level 4 includes:

- Provides at least three reasons with explanation of the importance of respecting the heritage and identity of others.
- Draws at least three reasoned conclusions about the reasons for inequality.
- Expresses at least three valid opinions about the impact on those involved in a past expansion of power or influence.

SQA Qualifications

In Senior Phase, pupils are aiming at qualifications and the meeting course specifications which are produced by the SQA. Teachers need to know what

the exam questions are likely to cover and teach courses to allow their pupils to do well.

The [SQA's course specification for National 5 History](#) allows options. One of the options in section 1 of the paper is Migration and Empire, 1830–1939. In section 2, there is an option on the Transatlantic slave trade. In section 3, there is an option of American history covering the second half of the 19th Century (i.e. slavery, the civil war and post-war) and another option looking at the civil rights movement in the USA.

Autonomy and guidance

In both Broad General Education and Senior Phase, there is scope for teachers to teach topics covering the history of black and minority ethnic people either by meeting E's and O's and Benchmarks or teaching towards certain options within SQA courses. The extent to which this happens is not clear, however.

Teachers and schools will draw upon a number of resources and guidance in developing their curriculums locally. Some examples of national level guidance and policy are set out below.

[Education Scotland shared guidance produced by the EIS in 2018](#) on anti-racist education. It has also shared [a resource on how to tackle racism](#).

The [Equalities and Human Rights Commission's guide for schools and the Public Sector Equality duty](#) states that while the PSED is engaged with how the curriculum is taught, it is not engaged in terms of what is taught (see p37). The [Scottish Government's race equality framework has a section on education and learning](#). This does not touch on the history curriculum.

Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government Actions

John Mason MSP asked a question on this topic on [18 June 2020](#). For ease of reference the exchange is included in the Annexe to this paper. The Parliament held a debate on [Showing Solidarity with Anti-racism](#) on 10 June.

Normally the finer details of the content of schools' curriculums is left to local discretion. There are, however, examples where the Scottish Government has worked together with partners across education to promote a particular aspect of learning. An example the Committee may wish to consider is in respect of LGBTI inclusive education (see: <https://www.gov.scot/news/lgbti-education/>).

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16 July 2020

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Extract from the Official Report

[16 June 2020](#) (Cols 60 & 61)

Racism and Slavery (School Education)

4. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the Black Lives Matter campaign, how dealing with racism and Scotland's links with slavery are taught in schools. (S5O-04431)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Diversity, equality and respect for others are at the heart of policies supporting school education in Scotland. Learning about current and past attitudes, values and historical events and their impact on society today forms part of the curriculum in Scottish schools.

The curriculum for excellence experiences and outcomes provide opportunities to teach black history by exploring a variety of issues, including slavery, human trafficking and exploitation. In addition, the study of slavery can form part of national 5, higher and advanced higher history national qualification courses.

John Mason: At the weekend, I was listening to someone speak about his experience of growing up in Scotland as a mixed race or biracial young person. Some of those folk can face particular challenges in our schools and elsewhere. Does the cabinet secretary think that there is adequate support on such issues for young people in our schools?

John Swinney: The fundamental answer to Mr Mason's question must lie in the application of the values that are at the heart of our curriculum and which are also engraved on the mace that sits in front of the Presiding Officer: wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity. We look to each individual school to ensure that such values are instilled and reflected in its ethos.

Although I am not doing so just now, for obvious reasons, I usually spend a vast amount of my time in schools around the country. What I see there, at first hand, is the translation of those values from our mace here in the Parliament into the ethos and the values of our schools. Many of the questions that Mr Mason has, fairly, raised with me can be confronted there, to ensure that young people have an experience that educates and equips them to address, handle and respect the diversity that exists in our society. That must be part of the ethos of individual schools, because it must be part of the ethos of our society.

Learning about what leads to and prompts the disgraceful events that we saw in George Square in Glasgow last night is an important part of the current appreciation that young people in our education system must understand.