

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1840](#)

Main Petitioner: Debora Kayembe on behalf of The Freedom Walk

Subject: Addressing racism in Scottish education

Calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to urgently address racism in the Scottish education system by:

- implementing anti-racist education in the classroom;
- delivering anti-racist training to all school staff and;
- record, monitor and address racist incidents in schools

Introduction

This petition covers similar ground to petitions PE1813 and PE1814 which are currently being considered by the Public Petitions Committee. Both relate to the inclusion of the history of black and minority ethnic people in the taught school curriculum.

Curriculum

The [SPICe Briefing for petitions PE1813 and PE1814](#) noted that the curriculum in Scotland is non-statutory. Guidance is produced nationally and there is significant autonomy at the teacher, school and local authority level.

In September 2020, the [Scottish Government's Programme for Government said](#):

“In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, and one of the recommendations made by Scottish Government's COVID-19 Ethnicity Expert Group, we will engage with relevant stakeholders to better enable our children and young people to learn about Scotland's colonial and slavery history and the real need today to challenge racism, eliminate racial discrimination and advance equality. We will ensure that the diversity of our society is recognised and represented in the education workforce at all levels in line with the ambitions of the Race Equality Framework. As part of this work we will address the under representation of Minority Ethnic teachers in Scotland by exploring alternative pathways into teaching for Minority Ethnic and other underrepresented groups.” (p110)

Education and training

Initial Teacher Education (“ITE”) is the education prospective teachers receive through universities. This can be an undergraduate degree or a post graduate course. A common route is the one-year Post Graduate Diploma of Education which includes significant periods of time in schools. ITE is delivered in a partnership between universities and local authorities and schools.

The universities are independent and have autonomy over exactly how and what they teach their students. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) accredits ITE programmes. The most [recent guidelines were published in 2019](#) and stated that “the legal and statutory frameworks which govern teachers’ work should also be addressed throughout the programme.”

[The GTCS’s standard for registration](#) for a teacher is the “baseline standard of professional competence which applies to teachers throughout their careers” (as described in the GTCS’ [Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning Dec 2012](#)). The standard for registration includes a number of professional values, including “Social justice”. Under this header, the GTCS calls for a commitment to “the principles of democracy and social justice through fair, transparent, inclusive and sustainable policies and practices in relation to: age, disability, gender and gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion and belief and sexual orientation.”

[The GTCS is currently seeking comments](#) on a new version of the Professional Standards due to come in next year (2021).

Completing an ITE course, undertaking a probationary year and gaining full registration could be described as the end of the beginning of the process.

[The GTCS states:](#)

“Having attained the Standard for Full Registration, teachers will continue to develop their expertise and experience across all areas of their professional practice through appropriate and sustained career-long professional learning.”

Professional learning is normally supported through the teachers’ employer. For most state schools in Scotland this is the local authority. The Scottish Government’s role in continuing professional development of teachers would normally be limited. There are however, examples where the Scottish Government has directly funded continuing professional development, e.g. [Learning for Sustainability](#).

Recording racist incidents

In 2018 the Scottish Government published [Supplementary Guidance on Recording and Monitoring of Bullying Incidents in Schools](#). This includes the reporting of discrimination-based bullying incidents. Local authority schools

are normally expected to record these incidents on SEEMiS, the national schools management information system.

To facilitate the reporting of bullying incidents, SEEMiS has a bullying and equalities module. The list of characteristics that can be reported on within SEEMiS includes bullying based on race and racism including culture.¹

The Scottish Government funded the production of guidance on how to effectively address incidents of racist bullying in schools. [Addressing Inclusion: Effectively Challenging Racism in Schools](#) was produced by the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights and Respect Me; it was published in 2019. This guidance stated:

“Not all incidents where racism occurs would be considered bullying. It is important to maintain a way of addressing and recording racist incidents which are not part of prejudice-based bullying.”

The 2019 guidance encourages the reporting of racist incidents where no bullying has taken place. The bullying and equalities module in SEEMiS allows for such information to be recorded.²

The 2019 guidance also covers early intervention and prevention, as well as responding to racist incidents.

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20 November 2020

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Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

¹ Personal communication with the Scottish Government.

² Personal communication with the Scottish Government.