

PE1813/1814/C

Scottish Government submission of 22 October 2020

As requested in your email of 24 September 2020, please find an update in relation to the following petitions that are being considered together.

PE1813 - Eunice Olumide - *Calling on the Scottish 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 - Tobe Amamize - *Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to embed Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) history into the school curriculum.*

The Scottish Government has now formally committed through the Programme for Government (PfG), published on 1 September 2020, to finding ways of promoting diversity and better teaching and learning about Black and ethnic minority history and the importance of tackling racism in society today in schools:

“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.”

PfG also commits us to:

“...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 under-represented groups.”

The ambitions of the latter commitment will in part be met by the Increasing Diversity in the Teaching Profession Working Group and the recommendations of Professor Rowena Arshad’s report: Teaching in a Diverse Scotland: increasing and retaining Minority Ethnic Teachers.

I should also say that a new £1.5 million funding package to help manage additional pressures as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and support the health and wellbeing of teachers was announced by the Deputy First Minister last month. Some of this package of support will directly benefit Minority Ethnic staff and teachers, through a targeted programme of coaching and mentoring, run in conjunction with Education Scotland and the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Since my previous letter of 14 August 2020, we have now developed a discussion document for engagement with stakeholders, and we are in the process of arranging meetings with them to discuss the issues in the paper and in the correspondence

and representations we have received. We are still finalising the dates but I expect these meetings will be able to take place by mid-November. Following these meetings, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills will meet with key stakeholders to discuss what further steps will be taken to help our young people understand Scotland's Black history and how that history influences our society today.

Education Scotland will shortly share their race equality in education resource which has been created with CRER and BEMIS for practitioners with relevant partners including SAMEE, the Anti-Racist Educator and Intercultural Youth Scotland for consultation, prior to releasing more widely. This will complete resources already collated including: equality advice for schools understanding racism; race equality organisations; curriculum ideas; support for different ethnic minority groups; intersectionality; and prejudice-based bullying and hate crime which can be accessed at.

<https://wakelet.com/wake/EKpqdexEpY3JoNdrlJp36>

Curriculum mapping work is also underway, and an early draft will be shared with relevant partners for input shortly. This consultation will allow any gaps to be identified and will inform further shaping prior to piloting with small groups of practitioners. It is expected that this work would be completed by March 2021.

Conclusion

I hope this provides reassurance that we are continuing to work to ensure issues around social inequality, racism and Black history are properly addressed within the curriculum and wider school life so that the diversity of our society is recognised and reflected within our education system overall.

I would be happy to update the Committee further on progress, once we have met with stakeholders.