



21 May 2019

Theresa May  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

**Timpson Review of School Exclusion**

We are writing to express deep disappointment with the Timpson Review of School Exclusion recently published by the Department for Education. Further, we request that you urgently facilitate a meeting between representatives of our organisations and the Secretary of State for Education and the Minister for the Cabinet Office so that effective action can be taken to address racial disparity and school exclusions.

Many of our organisations welcomed the announcement of the review, as exclusions are clearly a burning injustice experienced by substantial numbers of black and minority ethnic children and their families. We all know that a good education is one driver of lifelong individual economic and social wellbeing. We also know poor experience of education is life limiting and therefore if there is evidence of unfairness we need to address it urgently.

Having taken time to digest the Review, the technical report and looked at the published data tables, it is clear that in terms of ethnicity the review has served to obfuscate rather than illuminate the real issues. The analysis does not appear to understand how structural discrimination works (for example the role of racial discrimination in explaining higher rates of poverty). It appears that statistically significant results published in the technical report either do not appear in the review or are presented in such a manner that their significance is lost. When calling for the review you responded to Race Disparity Audit evidence that Black Caribbean pupils and Gypsy and Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage (GRT) were more likely to be excluded (for both permanent and fixed periods). The Timpson review's new analysis, whilst problematic, nevertheless confirms that both Caribbean Boys and Caribbean Girls are more likely to suffer a permanent exclusion and that this is a statistically significant association. This is also true for 'mixed' White and Black Caribbean boys and girls. Yet its presentation in the Review is used to explain that the ratio is not as high as the raw data. Nevertheless, the results are still statistically significant and should suggest to all that for these children racial discrimination is an explanation.

When considering fixed period exclusions, once again Black Caribbean boys and girls, GRT boys and girls, amongst others, are more likely to receive fixed period exclusions and that these are statistically significant associations. Once again, the Timpson review instead of acknowledging the significance of these findings

chooses to obfuscate, raising locality issues, or school issues, or the impact of trauma and so on. No one doubts that school exclusions are a multi-layered problem, but to underplay the importance of statistically significant results which point to the impact of racial discrimination is deeply problematic.

Turning to the issue of informal exclusion, the Timpson Review recommends formal recording of instances where children have been off-rolled, directed towards home education or AP which is not subject to regular monitoring, for example, but does not explicitly question the legality of these forms of exclusion.

Another concern is that the Review refers to the use of 'sanction rooms' and 'isolation units' as a 'half-way point' between excluding and keeping in mainstream education. It could be argued that this is informal exclusion by other means. If the young people who are put into these situations are not well-supported or given access to counselling or mentoring, such practices can have adverse and long-term effects. The Review does not make this clear enough.

With the repeated attempts to explain away rather than acknowledge racial disparity, it is perhaps no surprise that the Timpson Review does not call for any programme of action or make any specific recommendations to address it, beyond supporting the Equality and Diversity hubs and the training they may provide. Furthermore, even the recommendations that are welcome such as work to improve Alternative Provision (AP) pay such little attention to inequality that we have doubts that there will be any substantial impact on the experiences of black and minority ethnic children. We note the premature acceptance of all the recommendations of the Timpson Review by the DfE. In these circumstances we appeal to you to take the following steps to address racial disparity in school exclusions.

First, the DfE should establish a £25 million fund available to schools to drive down both permanent and temporary exclusions of black and minority ethnic children, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller. Schools should only be able to access this funding, if they commit to using Quality Improvement methodology to drive down numbers of permanent and fixed term exclusion of all BAME children to the same level as their White peers within three years. At the same time they must commit to driving down exclusions of all children by half by 2025.

Second, Ofsted should be required to, as part of every school inspection, publish disaggregated ethnicity data on the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions, including data on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Whilst the Timpson review inexplicably ignores the make-up and treatment of teachers, we recommend that in the absence of a nationally recognised data source for annual assessment of teacher satisfaction, Ofsted should publish data on numbers of BAME staff in leadership roles, percentage of turnover of BAME staff, as well as BAME staff against whom disciplinary action is being taken. Lessons learnt from other public services such as the NHS, suggests that the care and treatment of BAME staff is associated with the quality of care and the performance of an organisation.

Third, whilst we welcome the Timpson Review's call for more and clearer information for parents, we suggest the establishment of a national helpline for parents of children who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion. The helpline should maintain a register or advocates who can support and accompany parents to secure the best education for their child.

Finally, regardless of the failings of the analysis, the Timpson review still presents statistically significant evidence of disproportionality which suggests urgent and systematic action is needed. We fear that without taking the specific steps we are recommending, you are in danger of repeating past mistakes. When the

Youth Justice Board in 2010/11 decided to divert children and young people away from the secure estate, it did so without specific steps to address existing evidence of disproportionality. We now see the consequences of this approach: black and minority ethnic children and young people have gone from making-up around 21 per cent of the secure estate to now making-up 51 per cent.

We urge you to set aside the limitations of the Timpson Review, but instead be bold and take action that will help this generation of BAME children prosper and better ensure that inequality is not passed on to the next generation.

Yours sincerely



Jabeer Butt OBE  
Chief Executive

Signed on behalf of:

Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG)  
Black South West Network (BSWN)  
BME National  
BRAP  
Caribbean and African Health Network  
Council of Somali Organisations  
Croydon BME Forum  
Friends, Families and Travellers  
The Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)  
JUST Yorkshire  
Migrant Rights Network  
National BAME Transplant Alliance (NBTA)  
OLMEC  
Operation Black Vote (OBV)  
Race on the Agenda (ROTA)  
Race Equality Foundation  
Race Equality Matters  
Runnymede Trust  
UKREN  
Voice4Change England