

Working to protect children, families
and staff from **racism** and **harm**

HACKNEY EDUCATION

RESPONSE TO CHILD Q - PLANNING

Underlying principles

Hackney Council acknowledges and regrets the problems of racism and safeguarding approaches which led to the incident involving Child Q.

We recognise that this incident also raises other issues where racism has occurred, with profoundly damaging impact on children. We acknowledge the ongoing work of school/setting staff and Council colleagues in providing a positive environment in schools for many children and want to build on the strengths of Hackney schools, which by many national measures perform well.

However whilst acknowledging the strengths and improvements of schools in Hackney over the past twenty years, we also know there is still work to be done. We want to develop inclusive approaches and ensure that the education system in Hackney works and cares for all, including every black and global majority child and parent.

We welcome challenge from our community, from our councillors and from the Hackney Schools Group Board to strengthen our work and impact.

**The commitment from
headteachers:
March 2022 (1)**

Response to Child Q: a commitment from headteachers

The ordeal suffered by Child Q is dismaying and shocking. All school staff have a foremost duty to safeguard children. In this incident Child Q was let down and had a traumatic experience which will affect her long term. The incident itself is deeply distressing and raises wider issues around safeguarding, racism and adultification.

The report into Child Q's experience was released on Monday, 14 March 2022.

Hackney headteachers, at their conference on 18 March 2022, and in follow up discussion, produced this core statement in response to wider issues raised by the Child Q incident. They are taking this forward in discussions in their school and settings:

The commitment from headteachers - March 2022 (2)

As Hackney Headteachers, we jointly affirm our full commitment and continued action to the best possible safeguarding of every child in our care, ensuring a safeguarding first approach always applies. We know that we have already been doing work to eliminate racism in our schools, but recognise that there is much work to be done. We recognise that Black and Global Majority children face racism in Hackney and beyond: we are committed to and will act on taking forward anti-racist practice.

In Hackney we are ambitious, caring and inclusive in working for every child. As educationalists we will work jointly, with our children, their families, our staff and with other professionals, particularly with our Black and Global Majority stakeholders, in building on the strong work already in our schools, towards being a beacon of excellence in inclusion and anti-racism.

We are committed to revisiting staff training and guidance to ensure that all staff:

- feel confident that their duty to safeguard the children in our care comes above any other need,
- understand, and are able to counteract, any assumptions or actions that may lead to children being treated unfairly or unjustly
- are able to act to protect children in crisis as if they were our own, seeking senior leader support if needed.

We are committed to supporting and challenging each other to ensure this happens.

Immediate actions for Child Q, the school and other children

- Child Q and her family are being supported by a multi agency group. This involves support from education, Children and Family Service and the whole Council.
- The school is being supported with a wide offer of support for children and staff. There is an offer of Thinking Spaces for pupils, families and staff. Young Hackney and WAMHS are also part of the offer.
- Other schools have had advice, guidance and materials on talking to and listening to staff and children. Hackney Council will work to ensure there is a consistent offer across all schools.
- Schools have had guidance on searches sent out to them, pre-empting the national guidance called for in the review.
- Information and listening sessions have been led by senior leaders, with more set to take place, including one for parents.
- There has been a session by Jim Gamble, former Chief Police Officer and founding Chief Executive of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection, for education and schools staff.

Medium term work

Police in schools

Rapid action is needed on the role of police in schools which will look at:

- Protocols on safer schools police officers
- Guidance on how police work with schools when either the police initiate a visit to schools or the school asks for a police visit.

The working group on these revisions will include the safeguarding partnership, the police, education, headteacher representatives and councillors.

Interim instructions have been agreed locally with police and have gone out from the Director of Education to headteachers affirming strict guidance on any police visits.

The situation which occurred with Child Q will not happen again in Hackney under these protocols.

Medium term work

Joining up secondary schools and working on inclusion

Secondary schools will be urged to work more closely together with a joint purpose of providing excellent care and safeguarding for every child, with the strongest possible anti-racist approach.

The steps to achieve this include:

- Meetings between Hackney Education leads and Deputy Mayor Bramble, councillors, secondary academy heads, executive leads and chair of governors to gain joint commitment to the headteacher statement and collaboration, as well as commitment to pupil and parent voice.
- A secondary headteachers conference with a focus on best safeguarding, inclusion, anti-racism and early help to prevent exclusions.
- Continued work on our inclusion approaches and framework, going above and beyond statutory requirements.

Medium and long term work

Encouraging and sharing best school practices in safeguarding, inclusion and anti-racism

- Hackney Council will build on strong practice in safeguarding, inclusion and anti-racism across the borough and other London, schools and services.
- We will use school conferences and visits to schools for school and setting staff to develop and share best practice.
- Our officers, particularly school improvement partners and the SEND team, will evaluate, encourage and help develop best practice in Hackney schools. Federations, multi academy trusts and school alliances will play a particularly significant role in this work.

Ongoing work

Anti-racism in schools

- We have a number of strands of support which have been a positive influence over time, including the sessions on cultural competence and the diverse curriculum, which are ongoing.
- School staff are invited to attend the Council's anti-racism conference. Another conference with more emphasis on early years, schools and colleges will be set up for Autumn 2022.
- Training sessions on adultification will be rolled out across the all schools.
- Further investment will be made in leadership of anti-racism in schools and a new role will be created to lead on this work alongside the Children and Family Service lead.
- The work of the school improvement team will be reshaped so that anti-racism, tackling disproportionality and the voice and experience of black children, is the priority within the framework.

Ongoing work

The voice of children across the borough

We aim to build on the work of Youth Parliament and the Young Futures Commission to make sure we can always hear the voice of children and young people in all our work.

We understand the importance of capturing the views from children about their experiences in schools, most particularly the voices of those who don't do as well. This will include groups for whom this is a greater risk: black children, children entitled to pupil premium grant (PPG) and children with SEND.

There are a number of voluntary, borough and school led groups whose purpose is to give children a voice. We look to enhance this work, possibly adding an education role whose purpose will be to capture and promote the use of the child's voice in and by every school.

Ongoing work

The voice of parents/carers across the borough

Building on the work of the systems lead for parental voice, Debra Robinson, our engagement team, our councillors and our community and voluntary sector partners will join together to capture the voice of parents across the borough about their experience and their child's experience of education.

In particular we will capture the voice of those parents/carers who are most likely to experience a sense of exclusion or frustration.

This feedback will shape our actions and those of schools in making sure every parent/carer feels welcomed and supported by their child's school and by the education system in Hackney.

The planned work on clear signposting of advocacy services for parents/carers will be accelerated and expanded.

The Hackney inclusion charter

We will build on the initial headteacher commitment and the national and cross London work on an inclusion charter for schools, as well as the white paper/green paper steer to scope how to take forward a Hackney inclusion charter.

We expect every school to have or be working towards having this charter by April 2023, with a priority of secondary schools doing this by December 2022. The approach to this will include having metrics on some key areas.

We will appoint a lead for this work to make rapid progress with our secondary schools during Autumn term 2022. This will involve governor, school leader, school staff, children and parents input.

We will involve the Hackney Schools Group Board in this work.

Our staff and school/setting staff

We recognise the profound distress caused by the case of Child Q and other incidents of racism to our black and global majority staff.

As a result we will continue to provide:

- Peer listening sessions
- Information / drop in /Q and A sessions.

We will rapidly implement:

- Reporting processes which lead to action, building on what is already in place. With the support HR and our education team
- Induction and refresher training on anti-racism

We will continue to champion the work led by our diversity leads so that every black and global majority staff member feels truly valued, welcomed and a sense of pride in their workplace.

We expect every staff member to take an anti-racist approach.

We will emphasise through our work with schools their role in championing, recruiting and developing black and global majority staff.

Promoting anti-discriminatory practices with school governors

Our work to promote diverse boards and anti-discriminatory governance practices across all our schools will continue, focusing on:

1. **Diversifying governing boards** - expanding the young governor initiative and focusing on black and global majority governors
2. **Developing a culture of inclusive governance in how boards operate as a team**
3. **Understanding equality duties** - implementing and accounting for the impact of policies
4. **Refining school exclusions training for governors** - jointly facilitated with Hackney Young Futures Champions
5. **Extending the development of an anti-racist training programme for governors**
6. **Amplifying and ensuring pupil and parent voices are included in key governor decisions**
7. **Strengthening training for school governors on safeguarding**
8. **Providing training for governors on Adultification**
9. **Hosting our governors conference series in June / July 2022 tackling inequalities:** focusing on how race and social class impacts on the education experiences of children

Manifesto commitments

- We will continue to roll out a 'no need to exclude' policy across our schools. We will aim to see a consistent reduction in 'off-rolling' and excluded pupils in Hackney by 2026, and continue to tackle the disproportionality within exclusions of black children and children with SEND.
- We are proud of our record on making our schools' curricula more diverse. We are committed to further decolonising the curriculum and embedding this in our family of schools.
- We will work with our local police, schools, and youth sector colleagues to ensure children and young people are informed of their rights.
- If young people are stopped and searched, we will use this contact as a safeguarding opportunity to intervene and protect children from harm and to keep our community safe.
- We will further develop the role of the Parent Liaison Officer to work with parents, carers and schools.
- We will liaise with schools to ensure a whole school commitment to the principles of inclusion, and highlight the Inclusion Quality Mark which demonstrates and celebrates the work that schools do to support diversity. This will include working with our Alternative Provision providers to partner with schools, young people, families and carers where children are at risk of exclusion.
- We will maintain Hackney's record of education success, and we will work together with our schools to tackle the attainment gap so great results do not depend on a child's background or where they live.