

History teaching has substantially changed to address diversity, say teachers

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Some 87 percent of UK secondary schools report making substantial changes to history teaching to address issues of diversity, according [research](#) by the universities of Oxford and Reading, based on an Historical Association survey of history teachers.

According to the report, "The most important reasons cited for making changes to the [key stage 3] curriculum were a sense of social justice, to better represent the nature of [history](#) and the stimulus of recent events."

Alongside clear evidence about the extent to which schools are teaching about well-established curriculum topics, such as the history of British Empire or of the [transatlantic slave trade](#), the survey found that teachers are paying more [careful attention](#) to the range of experiences that they include.

Learning about 'forms of resistance or rebellion by enslaved peoples' is given equal prominence to lessons about the development of the slave trade or the campaigns in England for its abolition. At least 90 percent of all state-maintained schools reported teaching about all such dimensions. But the issue of its legacy remains largely unexplored (addressed by only 13 percent of schools).

One of the "most encouraging findings," according to Dr. Katharine Burn, one of the report's authors from Oxford's Department of Education, "Is the evidence that schools are now paying attention to the history of migration to and from Britain and to the diverse experiences of those who settled here."

The survey found 72 percent reported teaching about the history of migration while 80 percent reported some kind of study of Black and Asian British history. The most common focus was on the post-war period, including the experiences of the 'Windrush generation' but a great many schools also now explore the experience and role of black Tudors.

Despite the exciting evidence of innovation within key stage 3, there are concerns that the current GCSE syllabuses restrict the ability of teachers to introduce diversity into lessons. Respondents overwhelmingly

disagreed with the claim that their exam board made it possible to include study of the history of people with disabilities: (88 percent disagreed), the history of those identified as LGBTQ+ (87 percent disagreed) or the history of Black and Asian British people (71 percent disagreed).

According to Dr. Burn, "If we want to achieve more genuinely inclusive approaches to history [teaching](#), then reform of GCSEs is the most urgent priority."

Altogether, there were 316 responses to the Historical Association survey, with staff coming from every [school](#) context. More than 95 percent of respondents described themselves as white.

Provided by University of Oxford

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