Dear Head teachers and SLTs,

Since the brutal killing of George Floyd, the issue of racism has been centre stage in the UK. Understandably, many schools have a well-intentioned desire to use this moment to challenge racism through teaching.

However, we wish to raise concerns about the rush to adopt far-reaching changes in the school curriculum, and the use of staff CPD/Inset training, to promote a politicised ‘critical race theory’ agenda.

Issues to consider:

**Official Guidance**: It’s necessary to check or ask for guidance from the DfE and/or Ofsted on the inclusion of politically contested ideas on the curriculum.

**Political Neutrality**:

* + The 1996 Education Act makes it clear that teachers need to maintain political neutrality when teaching (see Teachers' Standards Part Two).
  + This means they cannot teach critical race theory as fact, and must present and allow critique of the theory and ideas.
  + Teachers can not present activists’ slogans such as ‘white privilege’ and ‘white fragility’ as unchallengeable facts, when in reality they are contested political categories, which are not only controversial but disputed academically.
  + The scientific evidence of unconscious bias, and how it should be challenged, is disputed. Yet schools are distributing materials which include the guilt-inducing claim that “as parents we should try to acknowledge and be aware of our own implicit bias”.

**Resources:** Some of the resources being distributed by schools seem to be in breach of the Education Act, for instance, the various versions of *A PARENT'S GUIDE TO BLACK LIVES MATTER* being distributed by so many schools.

* + Only one model of how young people (and their parents) should actively oppose racism is proposed in this guide; inequality and injustice are viewed solely through the prism of identity politics.
  + Under section headings such as ‘How do I explain white privilege?’ and ‘The danger of saying 'my child isn't racist'’ it is argued that “parents and caregivers must play an integral role in ensuring children have an acute awareness of white privilege.” Children are invited “to actively see colour, to see culture, to see history, and to acknowledge that race has an impact on people’s life experiences”.
  + We are aware of parents who are refusing to teach this to their children because they see it as at best biased, at worst a form of political indoctrination. They may well have a case while anti-racism is presented as above.

**Race Relations:** We would urge you to consider the dangers to race relations of promoting any agenda that focuses on skin colour and ethnicity as determinant attitudes or aptitudes. This is not to deny the personal experiences of young people, which could include negative experiences due to their ethnicity. Schools might choose to explore racial identity alongside other identities; but they should not teach a political racial identity to children.

Ultimately this new strategy is likely to fuel division rather than solidarity, and could well be counterproductive. Some white British pupils are likely to feel, at best, confused and unnecessarily guilty. Some black British pupils could feel that their achievements are due to their skin colour rather than their efforts and talents. This particular approach risks fostering unspoken resentment and undermining children’s and young people’s spontaneous relationships with each other.

**Curriculum:** We recognise that what is taught in schools is always open for debate and change. However, can we suggest that any change to the curriculum should be justified educationally, as an expansion of knowledge. Such interventions into the curriculum ought to be extensively debated among subject specialists, rather than being pre-emptively imposed with little discussion – and seemingly driven by political considerations. Is there a danger that an uncritical acceptance of the idea that the curriculum should be decolonised - as a means of delivering diversity messages - will compromise academic integrity? It might otherwise send generations of young people into the world with partial, even false, views of historical events and contemporary society.

Similarly, mandating the reading of a limited range of fashionable books should be strenuously avoided. Especially as the texts in questions argue only from one particular viewpoint, which is nonetheless presented as a canon of ‘truths’. This limits a rich educational exploration of the history of slavery and colonialism and the variety of different approaches to tackling racism, unequal treatment and prejudice. Schools need to ensure that opinions included in these books are not presented as factual and that the facts cited are accurate. Where contested ideas are presented, is the literature clear that the concept is one of a range of alternative cases, as they would be for any other set of ideas?

We all have young people’s interests at heart. We hope that the school might start a constructive discussion by sharing this statement by Don’t Divide Us <https://dontdivideus.com/> among your staff, governors and other stakeholders and use it is as a prompt for an open debate on the contemporary situation.

Yours sincerely,