

## Five Years On: Reflections on Anti-Racism in the Independent School Sector

Five years ago, Cecile Halliday, Dr Joe Spence, Dr Malcolm Cocks and I co-authored a piece for the ISC on anti-racism in the independent school sector. At the time, ACEN was a relatively small parent group which, in June 2020, mirrored the actions of students and alumni by sending open letters to institutions detailing experiences of racism in their schools.

Whilst some schools did not reply, those that did responded in strikingly similar ways, often showing a shared misunderstanding of racism, common challenges, and, in some cases, apprehension.

Among schools that acted immediately, the focus was largely on unconscious bias training, with some stopping there. Those that have continued to listen, inquire and uncover have come to understand, first, what the work of anti-racism is and is not, and second, that the work is ineffective if delivered in silos.

As anti-racism was a relatively new concept within education at the time, and particularly within independent schools, we began searching for providers who could deliver what was so urgently missing. It was clear to us that services and professional training available up to that point were seldom informed by lived experience and grounded in the actual concerns voiced by students, parents and teachers nationwide. As a smaller collective of parents within the network, which included academics, teachers and professionals with experience in race equity, we sought to fill that gap.

Since 2020, we have consulted with numerous independent schools and trained over 20,000 staff and students, achieving an average feedback score of 9.4. Alongside training, we have delivered an annual programme of events for junior and senior school staff, racially minoritised teachers, and HR teams, attracting thousands of attendees. Our consultancy services span recruitment, HR, marketing, and admissions, including targeted outreach events designed to improve representation and access.

Through this work, we have built close and lasting relationships with schools. It is the triangulation of research, institutional realities, and the lived concerns of students, teachers, and parents that consistently informs our approach.

This article shares some of our reflections ahead of ACEN's 5th Anniversary Student and Staff Conference, hosted by Eton College ([more information here](#)). It highlights the key lessons we have identified, revealing both progress and persistent challenges, and brings together the work and voices of a select number of schools we have collaborated with in different capacities, offering examples of effective approaches and the outcomes they have achieved.

### Leadership: Understanding Racism and Critical Inquiry

A key lesson for us over this period has been the need for schools to undertake the deeper work of moving beyond seeing racism solely as individual or intentional acts. At its core, racism is structural and systemic, embedded in policies, practices and cultures that shape both student

and staff experiences. Schools where this work is truly understood take an institution-wide approach that reaches across curriculum, recruitment, retention and progression, HR, admissions, inclusion-focused teaching, community engagement, safeguarding, data and monitoring, and all school policies and procedures.

Intellectual curiosity, particularly at headship and senior leadership level, we feel, makes a marked difference in how well anti-racism work is embedded into schools. Where leaders have engaged with race equity movements of recent years as a subject of genuine inquiry, rather than treating racism as an immediate problem to be fixed, the reflection has inevitably extended to what this means institution wide. This has translated into work that school communities, including staff, students and parents, can see, trust, and believe will remain on the agenda.

In practice, this curiosity has meant asking questions of staff, parents and students, and, crucially, returning to assess whether interventions and initiatives have led to change, rather than settling for a “one and done” approach to interventions, training or any other displays of inclusion. In our experience, this iterative process is inseparable from true intellectual curiosity. The deeper one understands what racism actually is, the clearer it becomes how fundamental the role of education is within wider societal inequities and from there, a strategic and sustained approach naturally follows.

This approach also demands a focus on equity rather than equality or diversity only, requiring schools to interrogate the structural barriers that shape opportunity and access. For independent schools, this also means reflecting on their role in the wider education system, particularly given the continued underrepresentation of Black students at the most elite universities.

In 2021, I wrote that ‘changing a school from one that simply claims it isn’t racist into one that is actively anti-racist must start with listening. Listening to Black and Minority Ethnic voices from across every part of the community: pupils (first and foremost), former pupils, parents, teachers, operational staff and governors. No anti-racist initiative will ever become properly embedded unless all these voices are heard, valued and working together.’ What I would add in 2025 is that, while there is still a need for senior leaders to be directly responsible for race equity and for champions and allies in every part of the school (among staff, governors, parents, pupils and alumni), schools should by now have moved towards making race equity an institutional, whole-school responsibility. Everyone needs to see themselves as an upstander for race equity if it is to have any chance of becoming part of the school’s ethos.

One of the biggest lessons I have learned as a school leader over the last five years is how easily we can fall into what I call cyclical initiative-itis. During that time, sustainability, gender, SEND and neurodiversity, AI, class and poverty have each, at different moments, been treated as the single most urgent priority on which schools must make a statement and take a stand. As each new issue arises, it becomes all too easy to take our foot off the accelerator on the others.

The last five years have shown many school leaders that we were not as advanced in these areas as we thought we were. The problem with initiatives is that they are not meant to last forever. What matters is not the initiative itself, but the results it leaves behind. Beware data that measures only input rather than outcome. An initiative should end only when its aims are so embedded in the school’s culture that they no longer need constant

promotion, because everyone defends and upholds them in their daily actions. That kind of cultural shift does not happen in weeks or months, or even a couple of years.

**Dr Joe Spence,**  
**CEO of the School Partnerships Alliance and former Master of Dulwich College**

### **Bias and Individual Racism: Peer to Peer & Teacher to Peer**

However, alongside structural considerations, we know from our training in schools, audits, focus groups and conferences, issues of interpersonal racism remain prevalent in schools nationwide, and they are growing. Without active structural work to dismantle long-standing issues, and given the current political and social climate, this increase is inevitable for practitioners working in this space.

Our sense, supported by feedback from teachers in our network, is that many schools have stepped back the work of enquiry and from dialogue with those affected and, in some cases, the wider racial literacy work with staff. At the time of writing, race and immigration protests are ongoing across the UK, with misinformation contributing to polarisation and encouraging discriminatory behaviour among young people. This, however, will come as no surprise to those working in this field. Requests from schools for student-level interventions through ACEN are at an all-time high, yet we cannot stress enough that such work will always be undermined if staff lack the confidence or knowledge to address issues of race and racism effectively. Racism is a safeguarding issue, and once the harm has occurred, it cannot be undone. It is therefore paramount, as with all safeguarding work, that we seek to prevent harm before it occurs.

While the premise of this piece is to make the case for preventative, institution-wide approaches and institutional memory, if nothing else is adopted by a school, it is essential to emphasise the importance of mirrored student and staff training on both overt and covert forms of racism, particularly microaggressions. These are daily realities in schools and account for the vast majority of incidents. The responsibility of schools to ensure regular, comprehensive staff training becomes more urgent when we understand the problem of chronic underreporting where race and racism are concerned.

Students, and racially minoritised staff, tell us time and time again that they stop reporting because their initial disclosures were minimised or misunderstood. While schools may have systems to identify such issues, some safeguarding-linked, their effectiveness depends on the racial literacy of the staff reviewing them. Without a shared understanding and clear guidance, staff responses are inconsistent, which perpetuates a cycle of silence, a lack of safety and a breakdown of trust.

In our work, we know that underreporting stems from several factors. Students fear disbelief, retaliation, or being perceived as the problem themselves by staff. Sometimes, this fear goes as far as believing their privileges could be taken away. One student recently shared that she chose not to complain for fear that her chance of becoming head girl would be blocked. While not as severe as many of the cases we encounter, it highlights just how deeply fear and a lack of safety can shape a young person's choices and silence their voice. We regularly hear of incidents dismissed as "banter" or "not serious," with the perceived intent of the perpetrator prioritised over the impact on the victim. This contributes to re-traumatisation, where the harm caused by

the school's failure to recognise, validate, or act appropriately outweighs the impact of the initial incident.

### **The Curriculum as a Starting Point**

For us, closely linked to intellectual curiosity and prevention, the curriculum is the natural place to begin. Evidence shows that all students benefit from a diverse curriculum that goes beyond belonging and representation. This makes clear that anti-racism work does not need to be confined to the language of inclusion. It demonstrates the vital role the curriculum can play in prevention, starting much earlier than many schools currently implement it.

In early years and primary settings, concepts such as fairness, difference and community can be introduced in accessible ways, and we have successfully worked with children as young as seven. Across all key stages, the benefits are clear: for racially minoritised students, it affirms identity and increases engagement. Equally importantly, for non-racially minoritised students, it broadens their understanding of the world, builds critical thinking, and reduces susceptibility to stereotypes. Crucially, this work must go beyond notions of fairness alone fairness alone, supporting visibility of social justice within learning and nurtures the skills young people need to think critically about justice, equity and their role in shaping a more inclusive society.

With demographic shifts across the country, independent schools, in particular, may want to see this as an opportunity and consider how a strong, diverse curriculum can advance their broader goals. With resources often not widely available in other sectors, some schools are uniquely positioned to lead by example, showing how a thoughtfully designed, academically rigorous, and critically engaging curriculum can provide students with real academic enrichment and advantage. At the same time, it contributes to character development, equipping students to be adaptable, empathetic, and well prepared for higher education and the workplace, where they will encounter greater diversity than within their current institutions. In this way, the benefits extend beyond school gates, helping independent school leavers navigate and thrive in a society alongside peers with a broad range of experiences.

These opportunities are particularly important in the context of social media, where conversations about history, society, fairness, and identity are already happening among students, sometimes with nuance, but often without accuracy or critical grounding. If schools fail to engage with these discussions meaningfully, education risks feeling redundant, surface-level, or abstract for many students. While a complete overhaul of the curriculum is neither realistic nor necessary, there is considerable scope to make teaching more responsive to the world outside the classroom.

However, delivery matters as much as content. Teachers who lack racial literacy or cultural competency may unintentionally cause discomfort or harm. This risk is particularly high in secondary schools, where sensitive topics require careful and skilled facilitation.

Anti-racism cannot be reduced to book corners, heritage months or occasional workshops. When approached strategically, it has the power to transform school culture and outcomes, creating stronger communities, a deeper sense of belonging, and greater academic engagement and rigour for all.

## **The Connection Between Teacher Recruitment and Student Admissions**

Nationally, staff from minoritised groups remain disproportionately underrepresented in many independent schools, progress in this area remains challenging. In the independent sector, the difficulties are influenced not only by geography and historical underrepresentation, which can affect perceptions of belonging among racially minoritised teachers, but also by individual choice. In 2022, Dr Malcolm Cocks and Justice Aina, who is currently completing a PhD at Cambridge on the experiences of Black children in UK independent schools, spearheaded a project to survey over 100 Black teachers. Most reported deliberately seeking work environments with greater pupil diversity, raising the question of whether staff diversity should be the starting point or main focus for anti-racism efforts, as it has been for many schools.

It is important to recognise what staff diversity is and is not. While increasing representation among teaching staff is vital, it should not be positioned as the cornerstone of an anti-racism strategy. Schools should consider where it operates as a separate strategic strand from pupil experience work, and where it intersects. When Black and Brown teachers are hired with the expectation that their presence constitutes equity and diversity work by proxy, even when they have not opted into such responsibilities, and for those who do take on these duties, often without formal recognition or compensation, existing inequities are compounded. Many report a “double burden”: they are retraumatised by systemic shortcomings while being expected to manage the institution’s understanding of race, implement anti-racism initiatives, and respond to incidents of racism. This frequently comes with fears of being labelled or pigeonholed as the person who is always “platforming race.”

Minoritised teachers cannot carry the burden of institutional change alone. Without comprehensive, structural strategies that are led and owned across the school, embedded within a long-term plan, and supported by leadership, schools risk losing the teachers they already have and discouraging those they are able to attract. In the same way that teachers are required to understand and perform their safeguarding duties in order to be competent and fit practitioners, all staff, at every level, must be equipped with a clear understanding of racism, including how it manifests overtly and covertly, and why the school is undertaking this work.

ACEN recommends that recruitment and admissions practices should be reviewed simultaneously, audited for structural issues that, without intent or recognition, may continue to uphold barriers to entry. For example, Black students remain underrepresented at Russell Group and Oxbridge institutions, reflecting broader systemic inequities. This underrepresentation is also evident within the independent school sector. Recruiting teachers solely from these universities’ risks reinforcing and perpetuating the very patterns of exclusion we are seeking to challenge.

## **Shared Purpose and Strategy**

Like any strategy, a school should first understand where it currently stands, where it aims to go, and fundamentally, why it is undertaking this work. This connects directly to intellectual curiosity and will differ for each school and leader. What is certain is that clarity of purpose informs the approach. Schools should be able to answer why anti-racism matters here and now, and consider the moral, educational, institutional, and societal imperatives. Without a clear rationale, anti-racism risks being positioned as a “nice to have” or diluted under the concept of belonging. In many cases, the rationale is loosely tied to external pressures, such as following

what other schools are doing, responding reactively to racist incidents, or managing outside perceptions. Ideally, the purpose should be rooted in addressing structural and systemic inequities and in a genuine desire to foster a sense of belonging, fairness, and community in all pupils.

This sense of purpose includes uncovering areas where known inequalities exist, drawing on national data to reflect on disproportionalities in academic outcomes, attendance, sanctions, and student belonging. Schools should move beyond deficit ideologies, recognising that national patterns of racial inequity are not hypothetical. The task is to identify where disparities may occur within their own institution, and to develop effective strategies to address them. Purpose should also encompass safeguarding responsibilities and the education of non-racially minoritised students, ensuring that all learners gain a critical understanding of equity and fairness.

At an institutional level, schools could also consider factors such as university expectations for students, demographic trends and financial sustainability, inspection frameworks and the risks of homogeneity, external perceptions of the school, and legal obligations, including compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Once a school has established its purpose, data must be used strategically. Just as schools analyse attainment or behaviour data to identify gaps, they should examine patterns relating to race. This involves asking which groups are disproportionately sanctioned, how attendance rates and predicted grades vary by ethnicity, and whether pupil voice responses are consistent across demographics. Many independent schools have historically not collected ethnicity data, which means disparities have often only been visible when overt racism occurs.

Meaningful progress requires regular collection, thorough analysis, and action based on data related to ethnicity and student experiences, alongside intersectional factors such as SEND, gender, sex, sexuality and socioeconomic status. One approach that has proven highly effective is ACEN's **Whole School Multi-Protected Characteristic Audit**, a biannual, bespoke survey and analysis tool grounded in the Equality Act 2010. The audit goes beyond single-issue reviews to capture the full picture of inclusion needs across race, gender, sexuality, disability, and socioeconomic status. Its unique strength lies in combining demographic data with lived experiences, producing actionable recommendations while building confidence and trust across the school community. Schools that have used it note how it provides a clear evidence base for pastoral and policy decisions, creates benchmarks for measuring progress, and ensures every pupil and staff voice is heard.

## Join Us - ACEN 5th Anniversary Conference

We are delighted to invite you to our **5th Anniversary Conference**, hosted at **Eton College on 9 October 2025**. The day will bring together educators, leaders, students, and partners to reflect, learn, and plan for the future of racial equity in education.

Find out more and register here: [ACEN 5th Anniversary Conference](#)

## **ACEN Services**

To support schools on their inclusion journey, ACEN offers a comprehensive suite of services tailored to each institution's needs:

- **For Staff & Schools**
  - Racial Inclusion Training for Staff
  - Racial Inclusion Workshops for Students
  - Marketing & Admissions Audits, Consultancy & Outreach Events
  - Recruitment & HR Audits & Consultancy
  - Whole-School Consultancy
  - Whole Protected Characteristic Audits (on request)
  - Student Work Experience & Workplace Initiatives

Find out more here: <https://www.aceducationnetwork.com/>

**Authored by Aisha Sanusi, MD, The African Caribbean Education Network (ACEN), supported by Dr Malcolm Cocks and Justice Aina.**

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## **Headteacher Reflections**

Bristol Grammar School was in a very strong position when I arrived as Head, which gave us the time and space to reflect on who we were, who we wanted to be, and how – together – we wanted to get there. Within our wider, relaunched Mission and Aims, we made explicit – clearly and succinctly – our desires to be a school where financial means and background were no barrier to admission, a school which reflected the marvellous diversity of Bristol, and one where that diversity and difference thrived. Giving these desires prominence at this highest level signalled our commitment – within our community and beyond – to becoming a school which was more representative of its catchment than it had been up to that point.

While this work has encompassed ensuring better representation across all protected characteristics, a large part of it has – of course – focussed on race and ethnicity. With the appointment of a brilliant and passionate Deputy Head to lead this work from the top, we started by trying to understand where we were compared to where we wanted to be, which initially involved collecting much better data on the background and ethnicities of our pupils and staff – a job which itself required careful thought and communication within our community. We looked at our recruitment processes for both pupils and staff, using external agencies to challenge and help us, and through work on the language and imagery we used, tackling unconscious biases, and employing positive action where appropriate, we saw the needle begin to shift in terms of representation within the school. A brilliant joint EDI group of pupils and staff allowed us to uncover the lived experiences of minoritised members of our community, and also allowed us to tackle representation – or the lack thereof – in our curriculum, which has since contained much greater – and, crucially, better thought-through – exposure to the ideas, works and contributions of minoritised figures in different subject areas. Staff are, of course, the biggest determinant of any success in this area, and being open to their

hopes and fears in this area has been crucial. As is the case with this work in any organisation, the fear of getting it wrong was potentially the biggest barrier to progress as an anti-racist school. It was, in fact, some of our brilliant pupils talking to all staff about their lived experiences in the school that helped us make the greatest progress here. Their challenge to us to “call it out, then call it in” was pivotal in moving forwards in this area – the idea that saying something, and doing so with compassion, is always better than saying nothing.

By returning to the data we regularly collect, we have been able to see the impact of our actions reflected in a pupil and staff body which is undoubtedly much more representative of the diversity of Bristol than was previously the case. For pupils, in particular, our diversity now pretty much matches that of the youth population in our catchment area.

Of course, this work never stops, and there is still much more to do. What has characterised our approach has been a clearly stated ambition, backed by actions based on curiosity, listening, honesty and persistence. We are beginning work on how we might contextualise our admissions and staff recruitment in ways which break down systemic barriers for minoritised applicants, and we look forward to working with organisations like ACEN, and continuing to learn from the best practices of others, to keep this work at the forefront of all we do.

**Jaideep Barot, Head, Bristol Grammar School & Vice Chair, HMC**

Working with ACEN has been instrumental in driving meaningful change across our school, reshaping how we approach educational equity and inclusion.

We know that it is vital for schools to work in order to create a fully inclusive and actively anti-racist community. Over the past few years, we have focused on the curriculum, developing our English and History courses, ensuring that students benefit from different voices and perspectives. Our revamped PSHE syllabus addresses issues around race and racism, we have increased opportunities for student voice, and we also benefit hugely from the range of academic and cultural events arranged by African Caribbean Society to mark Black History Month. However, we know there is still more we can do, and by listening to Black students and families, we've learned that their experiences as a distinct minority in our community are unique. The process was started by our Head and SLT leaning into what anti-racism really was, and thinking beyond the interpersonal, which is so often where these conversations begin and prematurely conclude. Beyond the work we've already undertaken, we are committed to increasing applications from Black families at all entry points to better reflect our local community.

ACEN's review and training has had a huge impact; it has been wonderful to work with experts who have challenged us to have open conversations and steered us to viewing 'the way we always do things' through a different lens. The experience has been educative and reflective, but the work has also been full of enthusiasm, excitement and optimism. Last year we hosted an Admissions Event alongside ACEN for families of African Caribbean Heritage. This was a really uplifting evening, as not only did we appreciate the opportunity to share with Black families some of the work we have been doing, but it also provided a further opportunity to hear from and listen to parents and their specific concerns. Thanks to the admissions review, we are now



confident that our admissions processes are welcoming and accessible to all applicants. ACEN delivered training to all our staff conducting interviews to ensure the teachers are best prepared to conduct admissions interviews that give an equal opportunity to all our applicants.

Most importantly we know that for an institution to be anti-racist and fully inclusive, we need to continue to listen and to evolve – and this is what we are fully committed to doing.

**Vicky Bingham, Headmistress, North London Collegiate School**

At King's, our EDI work is rooted in the belief that every pupil deserves to be fully seen and supported. We do this because we are convinced inclusion is foundational to excellence, part of our commitment to a holistic education in mind, spirit and heart. As we become a fully co-educational school, welcoming any child who would thrive here, we see this as central to our mission.

Our commitment to inclusion reflects both who we are and who we are becoming: a school preparing young people to contribute to their communities and shape the world for the better, not only succeed within it.

This is not new for us. In recent years we've taken active steps to develop a more robust, systematic approach to anti-racism and broader EDI priorities. We began by focusing on curriculum and culture, ensuring pupils encounter diverse perspectives in every subject and that identity is championed, not avoided, in the classroom. We've placed pupil voice at the centre: over 40 active forums now exist, and a dedicated EDI committee of school governors oversees this work.

We're proud of several key initiatives this year. Staff training, recruitment and admissions are our current focus, supported by our partnership with ACEN and a strategic emphasis on equity and access. We're developing socially conscious coaching and mentorship, as well as inclusive leadership training.

We've strengthened our reporting infrastructure by embedding formal tracking of discrimination-related incidents, analysing patterns in rewards and sanctions, and developing an innovative approach to restorative conversations as the cornerstone of our pastoral response. We've focused on means of disclosure, helping us better understand how pupils seek help and ensuring no voice is missed. With ACEN, we hosted a dedicated information evening for parents of Black children interested in King's. This collaboration has deepened how we welcome prospective families, making inclusion visible and substantiated at every stage of admissions.

**Anne Cotton, Head of King's College School**

Our journey began back in 2021, when we were finally able, post-pandemic, to begin addressing the clear under-representation of Black students at WHS compared to our local borough. As a new Head, I was determined to speak out about this disparity, but I also recognised the need for expert guidance on how to move forward meaningfully and responsibly.

Knowing where to begin is often the greatest challenge. As an academic school, two priorities emerged quickly: first, that we wanted to attract the brightest and best girls from across London, and were currently missing out on a key demographic; and second, that our curriculum needed to reflect the lived experiences of all our students, not just those traditionally centred.

We worked on our admissions and recruitment strategy while the academic team undertook a comprehensive review of the curriculum. This dual approach led to major changes, including the creation of a bespoke open event for Black families. Although initially met with some discomfort, it proved essential in signalling change and building trust. Throughout this process, we have been supported by ACEN, whose experience and insight have been invaluable. From advising on early strategic decisions to co-delivering events and supporting ongoing pastoral conversations, their contribution has helped ensure our efforts were both meaningful and sustainable.

We are proud to have improved the ratio of Black students in each year group from 1 to 2 percent to 5 to 6 percent, and to have increased the number of academic staff of colour in our common room. Our curriculum now reflects a broader range of voices and is consistently recognised for balancing rigorous scholarship with relevance and representation. But we are not complacent. We remain committed to making WHS a place where every student can see themselves reflected, not just to feel welcome, but to belong.

**Fionnuala Kennedy, Head of Wimbledon High School (GDST)**

At Haberdashers' Girls' School, our work with ACEN has continued to remind us that anti-racism is not a project with an end point but an ongoing commitment to questioning the way our school functions and the opportunities it affords. Over the past five years, we have begun to reshape our curriculum and broaden the range of perspectives represented in lessons, assemblies and school life. Yet what has been most powerful has been listening closely to the lived experiences of our students and families and allowing that feedback to help us drive change.

Looking ahead, we are determined to build on this foundation by embedding greater equity in admissions, by equipping staff with the confidence and racial literacy to respond to issues consistently and effectively and by ensuring every student can see their identity reflected in our community. For us, the challenge and opportunity is to create an environment where belonging is not dependent on tolerance but where difference is understood as integral to excellence. This is not easy work, but it is essential, and we know our progress will be measured by the trust our families place in us and by the voices of our students themselves.

**Dr Hazel Bagworth-Mann, Headmistress, Haberdashers' Girls' School**

Racism is a terrible, continuing scourge on our society. It's hard to accept that schools, as places full of the most malleable, most optimistic and most passionate members of that same society, are not immune from racism, but we aren't. What we are, however, are places where change can take place fast: each generation whose prejudices are challenged and reshaped will be a new beginning. In a school, it's always worth trying.

We have partnered with ACEN in our work with current parents and pupils, to tap into expertise and amplify the experience of minoritised young people across ACEN's partners. We know pupils, parents and staff want to see changes, not just to hear best intentions; at the same time, current families' and colleagues' experience is the critical lens through which our commitment to inclusion needs viewing. ACEN has advised Highgate in both listening and acting, providing a skilled and sure-footed guide who can hold us to account while creating trust and confidence.

The termly meetings which ACEN initiated for the parents and carers of Highgate's Black and mixed heritage children led to our parents running an additional Open Evening for families interested in finding out more about Highgate. They gave presentations and took questions from the audience of families, many of whom had heard about the evening through ACEN. Thanks to these efforts, for the second year in a row, we have doubled the number of Black pupils who will join us in September, at various stages from Reception to Year 12.

There is more to do. Racism doesn't go away with training and good intentions. Our pupils and parents tell us it exists at Highgate, as in society at large; we must continue to work to stamp it out. Black families make up 17.5% of our borough's population, but only 7.5% of our 2025/6 intake; we must work to reduce that margin. But the opportunity to keep trying and to see and feel change is inspiring: our thanks, therefore, to ACEN for being that catalyst for change.

**Adam Pettitt, Head of Highgate School**

At Haberdashers' Boys' School, we recognise the importance of treating anti-racism as central to both pastoral care and academic ambition. We recognise that equity work is most effective when it is whole-school, consistent and linked to the values we want our students to carry into adulthood. The conversations ACEN has helped us to hold with staff, students, and parents have been challenging at times, but they have also been energising. They have shown us that our students are deeply curious about justice and fairness, and that they want their school to model the kind of society they hope to build.

In the next stage of our journey, we will continue to build on what we have learned by embedding equity more deeply into admissions, recruitment, retention and the wider student experience. We also see a responsibility to prepare our students for the diverse world they will enter beyond Habs, by embedding critical thinking about equity into the curriculum and by modelling inclusive leadership across the school. Anti-racism must not be left to a moment of political urgency; it is part of the long-term educational responsibility we hold as a school.

**Robert Sykes, Headmaster, Haberdashers' Boys' School**