



Anti-Racism Charter for Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation Schools

Alumni Leadership Council recommendations for Schools, to improve the experience of pupils from Black and minority ethnic communities in boarding school bursary placements

Foreword

In July 2020, 100 SpringBoarders – past and present – completed a survey from Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation (RNCSF) about their experiences of racism and discrimination in their boarding school placements. In response, RNCSF formed an Alumni Leadership Council which, supported by a specialist D&I facilitator and RNCSF staff, met on three occasions in the autumn of 2020 to consider the survey findings and what actions they thought could make the biggest difference to ensuring all bursary pupils are supported to thrive in their placements; and more broadly to make progress in building anti-racist school environments.

The recommendations from the Alumni Leadership Council fall broadly into three categories: **better preparation, pastoral care** and **school environments**. Under each category came recommendations for RNCSF (i.e. the charity itself), its community partner organisations and schools. This Charter details recommendations specifically for schools; the document with suggestions for RNCSF and community partner organisations is available on our website ([LINK](#)).

The Council recognises that RNCSF schools, partner organisations and the charity itself already recognise and act on issues of diversity, inclusion and racism. By providing clear recommendations for actions that those with lived experience believe would make a tangible difference, the Council hopes to offer suggestions for high standards and collective progress across the RNCSF network – showcasing examples of good practice whilst seeking to raise the bar to improve the experience of BAME pupils in all boarding school bursary placements. RNCSF looks forward to continuing to work with school leaders, partner organisations and alumni to ensure that all SpringBoarders flourish in ever more supportive environments.

Preparation

In the past, too many SpringBoarders have had little idea of **what to expect before they arrive** at their boarding schools. Even more than non-SpringBoard pupils, bursary recipients can benefit from a real immersion in boarding to understand it better before they go. Some suggestions that RNCSF could introduce across all its placements are:

- I. **Taster visits**, ideally with at least an overnight stay, for pupils to experience boarding life.
- II. Working with schools to **tailor their inductions for new pupils** to the needs of SpringBoarders.

- III. With the help of RNCSF, connecting prospective SpringBoarders with 'buddies' – alumni or pupils – in the summer before they start (this can help build an understanding of the 'unspoken rules' as well as some of the language to expect, etc.).
- IV. Actively considering **opportunities for SpringBoarders to get to know other pupils before they begin** – they will not have the same 'peer' group of new entrants as many others, and this can lead to them feeling quite isolated in the crucial first few weeks of settling in.

Pastoral Care

It is clear from the survey responses that many SpringBoarders can feel isolated and hold a pressure to reconcile 'two worlds'. Some suggestions for things that have made a difference in helping bursary pupils navigate this are:

- V. Providing opportunities to **encourage SpringBoarders to feel comfortable talking about their experiences along with other bursary pupils**; if appropriate, creating mini-communities within the broader school community can help bursary pupils to feel less isolated.
- VI. Where pastoral and teaching staff demonstrate that they understand, and have ways to help support, those with different **hair types**. The [Halo Code](#) provides a well-accepted framework for this. Particular concerns raised in the survey include:
 - the need to be robust about the uninvited touching of hair, making it clear to all pupils and staff that it is never appropriate, and putting in place appropriate sanctions when it happens;
 - support for black pupils preparing and caring for their hair, e.g. ensuring that Matrons and/or older pupils are available (and trained or given a demonstration where necessary) to help;
 - rules that are appropriately inclusive of different hairstyles and colours, e.g. it is hard for many black pupils to understand why braids of different colours shouldn't be appropriate, when there is widespread use of highlights and hair dye amongst white pupils.
- VII. Consistently thinking about how to encourage all staff and pupils to respect and understand pupils' different approaches to their religious beliefs, relaxing, eating, sleeping and socialising habits. This can particularly come to the fore during **moments of cultural and/or religious significance** (e.g. Eid) which need to be acknowledged and celebrated to help all pupils feel accepted within their school environment, particularly within their boarding houses.

School environments

The results of the RNCSF survey show that too often SpringBoarders feel their boarding school environments were/are neither reflective of the society that they recognise, or inclusive of different identities. The culture of many boarding schools naturally values the heritage and traditions of their community. This love of traditions is often what makes those environments special; but it needs to be balanced with an equivalent value afforded to the vibrancy of diverse modern-day society. Having teaching staff and role models in positions of authority from a wide range of ethnicities would help enormously, but we recognise that this could take time. Whilst this must remain the long-term goal,

there are other steps that can be taken immediately to cultivate school communities that acknowledge, celebrate and better prepare all pupils for this vibrancy.

Some concrete suggestions for things that can make a difference:

- VIII. Actively and consistently creating opportunities to educate pupils about other cultures/religions – for example reviewing with Heads of Department the ways in which they will **build diversity into their curriculum teaching**.
- IX. **Outside of the classroom** – one of the great benefits of boarding school is the many opportunities, whether through PSHCE lessons, Societies, visiting Speaker programmes, debates or house activities, for staff to introduce pupils to the contributions to society, culture, history and industries of BAME people; and issues affecting BAME communities in the UK today.
- X. Seeking the views of BAME pupils as to how best to mark '**Awareness' days/months**, such as Black History Month and other notable occasions specific to other cultures that they would appreciate being recognised, couched within a broader co-curricular programme that embraces the contributions of multiple cultures (as above).
- XI. Ensuring that the **food** dishes on offer represent a range of cultures.

It is also clear from the survey that SpringBoarders have been accustomed to experiences of everyday racism as well as more serious incidents, and many did not report these at the time. The survey results include many examples of where SpringBoarders have reported incidences of discrimination that they did not feel were dealt with appropriately at the time, to the point that they were deterred from future reporting; and/or of SpringBoarders who never reported any of their concerns because they did not feel they knew how or why they should do so.

Some concrete suggestions for things that make a difference:

- XII. Having in place clear **policies at a school level which detail examples of unacceptable racist and discriminatory behaviours and how these will be dealt with** and procedures that make clear how to report concerns and incidents, including what to do if pupils feel that concerns aren't being treated sufficiently seriously. SpringBoarders want to know who to talk to about any concerns/incidents. It helps when they know who their RNCSF Reps are and when Reps have responsibility for routinely keeping RNCSF and partners informed of any concerns/incidents raised by SpringBoarders that are relevant to these policies.
- XIII. Consideration of how to allow for **anonymous reporting of concerns, where pupils are affected but don't feel comfortable raising specific complaints**. This can help schools and RNCSF to understand trends but we recognise that it would need to be implemented in a way that makes clear that disclosures of incidents of a serious nature need to be investigated thoroughly.
- XIV. Equipping staff, through appropriate **training (e.g. racial awareness)** to feel comfortable talking about race, know how to address specific concerns and their obligations to respond and act when witnessing or receiving reports of incidents of racism or discrimination. RNCSF could hold a register of training providers to recommend to schools.



XV. **Peer support or mediation** approaches, e.g.:

- Appointing house and/or year group prefects or mentors to advocate for pupils in relation to particular protected characteristics.
- Peer mediation spaces to give pupils a place to talk about and resolve conflicts.

Alumni Leadership Council 2020/21

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