

Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation (RNCSF) Our anti-racism commitments

Our anti-racism statement

In the wake of George Floyd's murder and growing recognition of the #BLM movement, we are taking steps to identify how we can bridge any gap in racial equity and injustice in our organisation, processes, partnerships and within our accredited schools. We want everyone, from our young people to our staff to our schools and partners, to know that we are open and ready to better understand how we, and through our partnerships and our work with schools, can begin to challenge racism and create anti-racist environments. We are firmly committed to doing all that we can to tackle racism and all forms of discrimination that our pupils experience and within our own organisation; and to support to all our young people to help drive change within and outside their schools.

Anti-Racism Alumni Leadership Council

In July 2020 we sought survey feedback of experiences of racism and discrimination in their bursary placements from 100 past and present RNCSF pupils (hereafter referred to as 'SpringBoarders' for ease). To help us to reflect on and respond to the results of this survey, we 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 what actions could make the biggest difference to ensuring all bursary pupils can thrive in their placements.

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. The commitments that RNCSF itself will make directly to its operations and through its partnerships with community organisations are set out here, with those that we recommend for our schools provided in the separate [Anti-Racism Charter for RNCSF schools](#).

Preparation

Going to boarding school can offer life-transforming opportunities, but it also involves a dramatic change in environment for bursary award holders. This negotiating of 'two worlds' can be difficult and, at times, stressful. On starting in their new bursary placements, many 'SpringBoarders' feel acutely different from their new peers, whether due to their ethnicity or other factors such as their family's socioeconomic circumstances. In the past, many 'SpringBoarders' have not felt sufficiently well prepared for this. We might think of this preparation as safeguarding – a necessary step to ensure the safety and wellbeing of 'SpringBoarders' before they arrive in their boarding environments.

We, and our partner organisations, have a responsibility to **prepare 'SpringBoarders' more consistently** before they start their bursary placements. We will pull together recommended **examples of good practice in preparation for bursary placements**. As a minimum, this preparation should comprise **1- or 2-hour sessions** weekly in the summer before the school placement begins. Best practice is where it takes place over the course of the whole year prior to placement. The focus needs to be on empowering pupils to feel prepared and able to respond confidently in their own way. It needs to help **familiarise pupils with what to expect** in the social environment of their new school and equip them with skills in e.g. building confidence, independence and being open to new opportunities; as well as explicitly confront that pupils

might feel 'different' to support pupils with how they would respond if they experience or witness racism or other forms of discrimination. Preparation needs to be age sensitive and available to pupils without community partner organisations as well as those referred through community partner organisations.

Without the family history of attending a boarding school, or friends due to attend those schools, 'SpringBoarders' can lack the **connections to help in this preparation**. Where possible we put **'SpringBoarders' in touch with an alumni mentor** to provide guidance and support in the summer before their new school placements starts. Such guidance and support can be generic – such as helping to prepare for boarding life, e.g. chapel, prep, 'exeats' etc. and not necessarily school-specific, though if there is an alumni match from the same school that can be really powerful. We also ensure that there is a **'buddy'** at the school whom they meet before arriving at the start of term. If there is no SpringBoarder already at the school, a non-'SpringBoarder' at the school can be allocated as a buddy if given clear guidance.

Pastoral Care

It is clear from the survey of pupils in the summer of 2020 that many 'SpringBoarders' were both accustomed to incidences of racist abuse and did not feel able to report these at the time. There are lessons to be learnt from the examples of some schools who have created environments and support networks within which pupils did feel able to report such incidents. To strengthen the networks of support around 'SpringBoarders' and ensure they feel their particular needs are recognised by their school community, we will:

- Encourage schools to provide opportunities to encourage 'SpringBoarders' to feel comfortable talking about their experiences, e.g. regularly bringing them together with other bursary pupils; **creating mini-communities within the broader school community can help bursary pupils to feel less isolated.**
- Organise termly Zoom calls for groups of 'SpringBoarders', to provide another avenue of **support and a community of people with a shared experience**; and think about other means (e.g. events if possible) where 'SpringBoarders' can be encouraged to feel part of a broader community.
- Facilitate **school visits** from partner organisation reps and RNCSF staff to check in on 'SpringBoarders' within their school environments and find out how they are adjusting and settling in to their boarding lives: providing reassurance of external support and alleviating any feelings of isolation.
- Try to conduct **leaving interviews/surveys** with all Y13 school leavers to increase our understanding of 'SpringBoarders' experiences at different schools, and strengthen the future matching process.
- Support the continued work of the Alumni Leadership Council to evaluate how these proposed changes have made an impact, and to discuss in what other areas we can help make improvements.

School environment

As with the requirement for schools to share concerns of a safeguarding nature, RNCSF routinely ask schools to keep them informed when a 'SpringBoarder' reports having been the victim of racist behaviour and/or abuse. As well as urging all the schools that we work with to foster a culture and environment in which disclosures of hate crimes and experiences of discrimination can be safely made, we also provide an [anonymised reporting tool](#) for any RNCSF pupil or alumni to use, to ensure that we can build an understanding of pupil experiences over time.

Our commitments to ensure we become an anti-racist organisation

In addition to the Alumni Leadership Council's recommendations, we are taking several other actions to combat our pupils' experiences of racism and to ensure our own organisation is inclusive and equitable.

Schools

From 2021 onwards, the recommendations in our [Anti-Racism Charter for RNCSF schools](#) will be included in the Memorandum of Understanding with schools and community partner organisations which is used to govern all RNCSF bursary placements, and which provides the ongoing mechanism by which we, our community partner organisations and our schools can measure performance. The Charter will also form part of the RNCSF accreditation process, through which we establish whether schools provide an appropriately safe and inclusive environment in which bursary pupils can thrive. In addition to this, we will hold regular discussions with schools about their response to racism, normalising the conversation about ethnicity and supporting schools wherever possible with their actions.

Pupils and alumni

We will:

- Conduct an annual survey of pupils and their parents/guardians about their experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination in bursary placements.
- As well as urging all the schools we work with to foster a culture and environment in which allegations of hate crimes and disclosures of experiences of discrimination can be safely made, we have created an [anonymised reporting tool](#) for those wishing to report these directly to us.
- Train some of our alumni to become Anti-Racism Ambassadors and speak to our schools and other interested organisations about improving school environments for pupils from Black and ethnic communities.
- Host fora for SpringBoarders across our network to talk about their experiences of racism and to share the actions which they and their schools are taking to combat this.
- Continue to incorporate pupils' ideas into our Anti-Racism Charter to ensure that it remains a living and relevant document.

Governance

- Our staff and trustees will participate in anti-racism training.
- Staff will receive additional training in the Anti-Racism Charter from our Anti-Racism Ambassadors, to understand how it can be applied in different school contexts.
- From the 2021/22 academic year we will form an Anti-Racism Steering Group to oversee our anti-racism work over time and hold us to account.