



مدرسة جيمس متروبول
GEMS Metropole School
MOTOR CITY

Creating a Sense of Belonging for All:

Raising awareness on Race, Racism and Society at GEMS Metropole School

This report outlines the professional development delivered to staff at GEMS Metropole School as part of its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) journey, focusing on 'Creating a Sense of Belonging for All.' The sessions aimed to raise awareness of race, racism, and their impact on society while exploring best practices within the UK education system and reflecting on our own educational context in the UAE. This initiative sought to equip staff with the knowledge and confidence to identify and understand racism, cultivating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

December 2024

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Introduction

At GEMS Metropole School, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) journey is grounded in a commitment to creating a true sense of belonging for every member of the school community. Recognising the transformative power of inclusivity, the school seeks to cultivate an environment where every individual feels respected, valued, and empowered to thrive. A significant milestone in this journey has been the delivery of professional development sessions in Term 1 to all teaching staff on the topic of Race, Racism, and Society.

These sessions were informed by findings from last year's DEI report, which highlighted that 25% of staff members reported experiencing racism within the school, often occurring in isolated pockets. Recognising the urgency of addressing these concerns, the professional development initiative aimed to provide a foundational understanding of race and racism and their manifestations within society and the UK education system. By building awareness and promoting critical reflection, the sessions sought to empower staff to recognise and address instances of racism within the school environment.

The training was underpinned by a range of theoretical and practical frameworks, including Helms' White Racial Identity Model, which guided an exploration of where individuals currently stand in their racial awareness journey and where they aspire to be. This model provided a foundation for self-reflection and growth among staff, enabling them to better understand their own identities and biases. Additionally, the sessions incorporated David Gillborn's Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine how systemic racism operates within educational structures, Dr. Camara Jones' racism framework to analyse the different levels at which racism manifests, and the Macpherson Report, which highlighted institutional racism and its implications for education. Together, these frameworks offered a comprehensive approach to understanding how racism functions in society and how it can be disrupted within the school context.



This report provides an overview of the professional development delivered, its theoretical underpinnings, and an analysis of the findings. It will also assess the impact of the sessions on staff awareness, confidence, and practices, laying the groundwork for future DEI initiatives within the school. By addressing these critical issues, GEMS Metropole School aims to take meaningful steps toward becoming an inclusive and equitable learning community.



“Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced”.

James Baldwin

Theoretical and Practical frameworks

The Imperative of Educating Teachers About Race and Racism

In a globalised world, schools are microcosms of diverse societies where educators play a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes and beliefs of future generations. Teachers are not only facilitators of academic knowledge but also role models for the students who pass through their classrooms. Given this responsibility, it is imperative to equip teachers with a critical understanding of race, racism, and their manifestations in society. This is not merely a theoretical exercise but a practical necessity to create harmonious communities and prepare students to navigate the complexities of a globalised world.

The training utilised a robust combination of theoretical and practical frameworks, enabling staff to explore racism's multi-faceted impact within education. By promoting self-reflection and systemic analysis, these sessions encouraged meaningful dialogue, equipping staff to identify and address inequities in their professional contexts.

Helms' White Racial Identity Model

The training began with Helms' White Racial Identity Model, which provides a structured pathway for understanding where individuals currently stand in their racial awareness journey and where they aspire to be. Participants explored Helms' six stages: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independence, Immersion/Emersion, and Autonomy to reflect on their own biases and develop a deeper understanding of their positionality. This model encouraged personal growth as an essential foundation for addressing systemic racism.

Mary Douglas' Metaphor of "Dirt as Matter Out of Place"

Building on this self-reflection, Mary Douglas' metaphor was introduced to illustrate how societal norms categorise certain groups or behaviours as "out of place." This classification reinforces exclusion and marginalisation, often in subtle and systemic ways. Staff examined how these patterns manifest in society, educational settings, such as classroom dynamics, curriculum content, or institutional policies, and discussed strategies for disrupting these entrenched norms.



Dr. Camara Jones' Framework on Racism

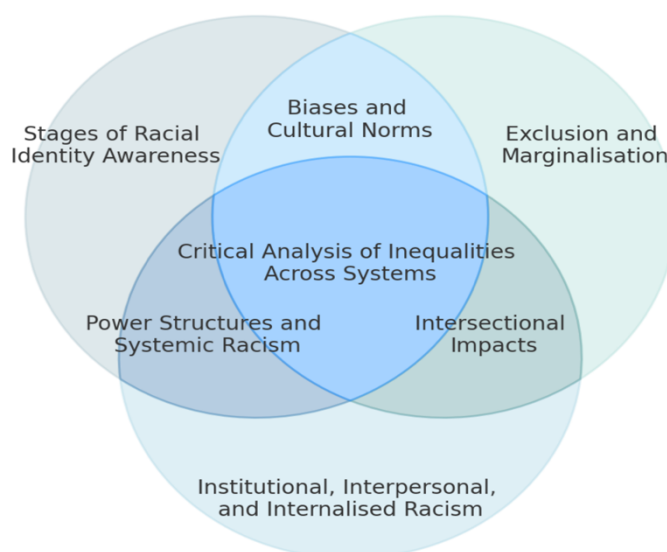
Dr. Camara Jones' framework was then used to analyse racism at three interconnected levels: institutional, interpersonal, and internalised. This model helped participants understand how racism operates across these dimensions, providing insights into how personal biases, organisational structures, and societal systems interact to perpetuate inequity. Staff reflected on how these levels apply to their own roles within the school and considered practical ways to address them.

Critical Race Theory and Derrick Bell's Interest Convergence

The session continued with Critical Race Theory (CRT), particularly as adapted for the UK context by David Gillborn. To bring CRT to life, staff listened to an extract from a podcast where Gillborn explained what systemic racism looks like within education. He described how policies that appear neutral in design often result in unequal outcomes, disproportionately disadvantaging minority ethnic groups while benefiting others. Following this, staff engaged in group discussions, sharing their thoughts, and writing down ideas about how systemic racism might manifest within their own educational context. Derrick Bell's concept of interest convergence was also introduced, sparking further reflection on how racial progress often occurs only when it aligns with the interests of dominant groups. These discussions allowed staff to critically analyse their own practices and identify potential areas for change.

The Macpherson Report

The training concluded with a revisit to the Macpherson Report, which brought the concept of institutional racism into the public sphere following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Staff examined how the report's findings remain relevant today, particularly in education.



The Role of Teachers in Addressing Racism

Teachers are uniquely positioned to influence students' perceptions of race and equity. As Gillborn (2008) argues, "education is neither neutral nor innocent; it is deeply implicated in the construction and maintenance of inequalities." This statement highlights the idea that schools, as institutions, can perpetuate systemic racism unless deliberate action is taken to disrupt these patterns. Without proper training, educators may unconsciously reinforce biases and stereotypes, thus perpetuating cycles of inequality.

David Gillborn, a prominent UK scholar, has extensively adapted Critical Race Theory (CRT) to the context of schools and education within England, using it as a framework to interrogate systemic racism in educational policies and practices. Gillborn's (2008) work demonstrates how CRT is not only a tool for understanding historical inequalities but also a framework for predicting future trends in systemic racism. He asserts, "Racism is not an aberration or a mistake; it is a routine and everyday feature of the education system." This perspective underscores the proactive role CRT plays in identifying and addressing racial inequities before they manifest in damaging ways. Gillborn further argues that "policy developments in education often appear neutral but in practice, they privilege whiteness and disadvantage minority ethnic groups" (Gillborn, 2008).

CRT, as Gillborn explains, equips educators with the tools to deconstruct policies and practices that perpetuate inequalities. His research reveals how data can be analysed through a CRT lens to uncover patterns of systemic bias, such as the overrepresentation of Black and minority ethnic students in school exclusions or their underrepresentation in higher academic tracks. This predictive capacity positions CRT as not merely a retrospective tool but a forward-looking framework that can guide schools in creating equitable educational environments. In the broader context of teacher education, Gillborn's work reminds us of the necessity for educators to develop critical thinking skills that enable them to challenge inequitable systems and foster transformative change in their classrooms and schools.

Callender (2017) adds that the culture of whiteness in teacher education often renders race invisible, marginalising the voices and experiences of minority communities. Callender writes, "Whiteness operates as an unmarked norm in teacher education, often resulting in a lack of critical engagement with race." This lack of awareness can have a direct impact on students, as teachers may unintentionally fail to create inclusive learning environments or address issues of bias and discrimination effectively. Teacher training programs must, therefore, actively engage educators in conversations about race to dismantle these entrenched norms.

Intersectionality in Education: A Multi-Layered Approach

Incorporating the concept of intersectionality, first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), provides a more nuanced framework for understanding how overlapping identities, such as race, gender, class, and religion, shape experiences of inequality in schools. Intersectionality highlights that students and educators do not face racism or discrimination in isolation; rather, these issues are compounded by other forms of social disadvantage. For instance, Black female students may face a combination of racial and gender biases, while Muslim students of colour often contend with the intersection of racism and religious discrimination. Crenshaw (1991) argues that ignoring these intersections risks creating “single axis” solutions that fail to address the full complexity of systemic inequities.

This concept is particularly relevant in schools, where policies and practices often overlook the compounded disadvantages experienced by students from marginalised groups. Teachers must, therefore, be trained to identify and address these intersecting forms of discrimination to create inclusive learning environments. By adopting an intersectional lens, educators can move beyond surface-level understandings of equity and develop strategies that respond to the diverse needs of their students. This approach ensures that initiatives aimed at promoting equity in education are not only effective but also truly transformative.

Learning from Derrick Bell’s Interest Convergence Principle

Derrick Bell’s Interest Convergence Theory, a cornerstone of Critical Race Theory, offers a sobering lens through which to understand societal responses to racism. Bell (1980) posits that “progress in civil rights often comes not as a result of altruistic intentions but as a byproduct of converging interests.” This theory highlights why proactive education is essential: waiting for a tragic event, such as the murder of Stephen Lawrence in the UK or George Floyd in the US, to catalyse action is not acceptable. Bell warns that relying on external shocks to drive change risks allowing systemic racism to persist unchecked. Schools, as institutions of change, must reject this reactive approach and instead cultivate proactive measures to educate staff and students about race and racism.



Aligning Educational Practices with the UAE's Commitment to Tolerance and Inclusivity

In the UAE, the emphasis on tolerance and inclusivity is deeply embedded within the nation's legislative and societal frameworks. The Federal Anti-Discrimination Law serves as a cornerstone for creating inclusive policies that address systemic biases, reinforcing the importance of a unified approach to diversity in education (Alshamsi, 2022). Research from Zayed University emphasises the role of tailored multicultural education in bridging cultural and societal gaps, providing educators with tools to navigate the complexities of diverse classrooms effectively (Goby and Nickerson, 2016). National initiatives such as those led by the Federal Youth Authority further illustrate the UAE's proactive stance, embedding values of unity and inclusion within its educational strategies (Federal Youth Authority, 2023).

This alignment with national values finds resonance in GEMS Metropole School's approach, which integrates frameworks like Derrick Bell's Interest Convergence Theory. This theory underscores the need for proactive reforms rather than reactive measures, a philosophy reflected in UAE initiatives such as the Year of Tolerance (2019). The UAE's official symbol for tolerance, the Ghaf tree, as pictured below, represents resilience, co-existence, and harmony, embodying the spirit of the nation's commitment to these values. By equipping educators to lead critical discussions on race and systemic change, the school demonstrates its commitment to promoting equity and inclusivity. As Lander (2016) points out, reflective professional development is essential for dismantling inequities, and GEMS Metropole School is positioning itself as a leader in this endeavour.



The next two pages feature posters outlining Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones' Racial Identity Framework, which were explained and explored in depth during the professional development sessions. CRT, originally conceptualised by Derrick Bell and adapted by David Gillborn for the UK education context, provided participants with a lens to examine systemic inequities and their implications in schools. These frameworks helped staff conceptualise and apply these ideas within the classroom, educational settings, and their daily lives, equipping them with a deeper understanding and actionable strategies to promote inclusivity and equity.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical Race Theory (CRT), founded by Derrick Bell in the 1970's and other scholars, examines how racism is embedded in laws and systems rather than just being individual prejudices. This theory has now evolved and is used in most Western countries. Below is a simplified breakdown of key strands of CRT:

Racism is Ordinary, Not Exceptional



Racism is a common and enduring feature of society, not an aberration or a rare event. It is deeply embedded within social, cultural, and institutional structures, shaping everyday experiences and outcomes in profound and often invisible ways.

Interest Convergence



Change benefiting marginalised groups often occurs only when it also benefits the majority (usually those in power). "Interest convergence" reflects how systemic inequalities persist and how true equity requires addressing power imbalances.

The Social Construction of Race



Race is not a biological reality but a social construct created to categorize and stratify people. It has been used historically to justify unequal treatment and maintain systems of power and privilege.

Intersectionality



People's experiences of discrimination are shaped by overlapping identities, such as race, gender, class, and religion. Intersectionality shows how multiple forms of oppression combine to create unique challenges.

Systemic Nature of Racism



Racism is not just about individual bias but is embedded in legal, economic, and social systems. These structures perpetuate inequality, often disadvantaging marginalized groups while privileging others.

Commitment to Social Justice



CRT is not just about analyzing racism but is also a call to action to dismantle oppressive systems and achieve equity. It emphasizes the need for transformative change by challenging dominant narratives and amplifying marginalized voices.

RACIAL IDENTITY FRAMEWORK

Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones' racial framework identifies four levels of racism: internal, where individuals internalise negative stereotypes about their own race; interpersonal, involving prejudice and discrimination between individuals; institutional, reflecting inequities in policies and practices within organisations; and structural, encompassing the broader societal systems that perpetuate racial inequalities. This framework highlights the interconnectedness of these levels and the need for comprehensive approaches to address racism.

INTERNAL RACISM

Internal racism happens when marginalised individuals accept negative stereotypes about their own race.

This can cause low self-esteem or rejection of their cultural identity.

It shows the deep impact of systemic racism on self-perception.

Internal racism reinforces racial inequalities by perpetuating disempowerment.

INTERPERSONAL RACISM

Interpersonal racism is when one person shows prejudice or discrimination towards another based on race.

It can include obvious actions like racist language or exclusion.

It also appears in subtle ways, like Microaggressions.

This type of racism strengthens inequality and creates unwelcoming environments.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Institutional racism happens when organisations have practices or policies that unfairly disadvantage certain racial groups.

It shows up in areas like education, jobs, housing, and healthcare.

This type of racism often works without obvious intent but still creates unequal opportunities.

It keeps racial inequalities in place and becomes part of society's structure.

STRUCTURAL RACISM

Structural racism refers to systems and practices that uphold racial inequalities across society.

Rooted in historical injustices, it shapes opportunities through social, political, and economic systems.

Often unnoticed, it reinforces systemic disparities in power, privilege, and access.

It restricts marginalised groups from equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Racial Identity: Helms' Framework for Personal and Systemic Growth

Helm's White Racial Identity Model further provides a roadmap for educators to understand their own racial identities and biases. Helm's (1990) outlines six stages - **Contact**, **Disintegration**, **Reintegration**, **Pseudo-Independence**, **Immersion/Emersion**, and **Autonomy** - that describe the journey toward developing a positive, anti-racist identity. By progressing through these stages, educators can become more aware of their own positionality and be better equipped to engage in meaningful discussions about race. This self-awareness is critical, as it allows teachers to model the kind of reflective and inclusive behaviours they wish to instil in their students.

Helm's Racial Identity Model

Helm's Racial Identity Model is a framework that explores the stages of racial identity development in individuals, focusing on how people understand and respond to their own and others' racial identities.

1. Contact

Individuals are unaware of racial issues and see race as unimportant or irrelevant.

2. Disintegration

Awareness of racial inequalities emerges, often accompanied by guilt, confusion, or anxiety.

3. Reintegration

A defensive retreat to dominant racial group superiority or avoidance of racial issues.

4. Pseudo - Independence

Acknowledgment of racial inequalities begins, but understanding is still limited and often intellectualised.

5. Immersion/Emersion

Individuals actively seek to learn about racism and challenge their own biases, developing a deeper understanding.

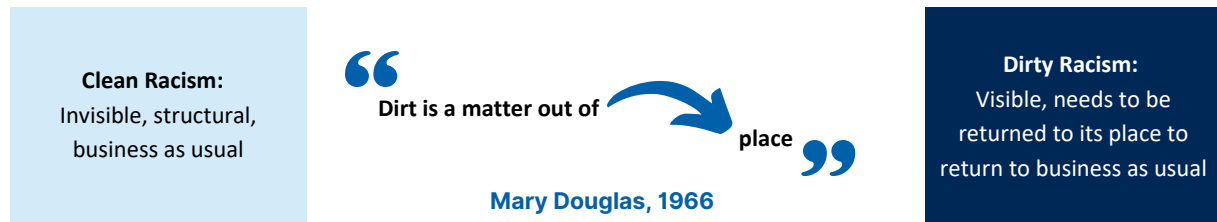
6. Autonomy

A positive, informed racial identity is achieved, accompanied by a commitment to social justice and equity.

Clean and Dirty Racism: A Reflection on Mary Douglas's Metaphor

Mary Douglas's famous metaphor, "dirt as matter out of place," provides a compelling lens for understanding the construct of clean and dirty racism. Douglas (1966) argues that dirt, or disorder, challenges societal norms and boundaries, highlighting the arbitrary yet powerful distinctions humans create to impose order. Applied to racism, this metaphor illustrates how social hierarchies classify certain racial groups as "clean" or "dirty" based on cultural and systemic norms. Racism persists not merely as prejudice but to preserve societal "cleanliness" by excluding or marginalising those deemed out of place. This concept of dirty racism emphasises how institutions, including schools, embed these hierarchies, often invisibly, perpetuating inequality under the guise of maintaining order and norms. For educators, recognising these mechanisms is crucial in dismantling racist structures and promoting inclusive spaces that challenge the misplacement of individuals based on race.

Dirty and Clean Racism as 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966)

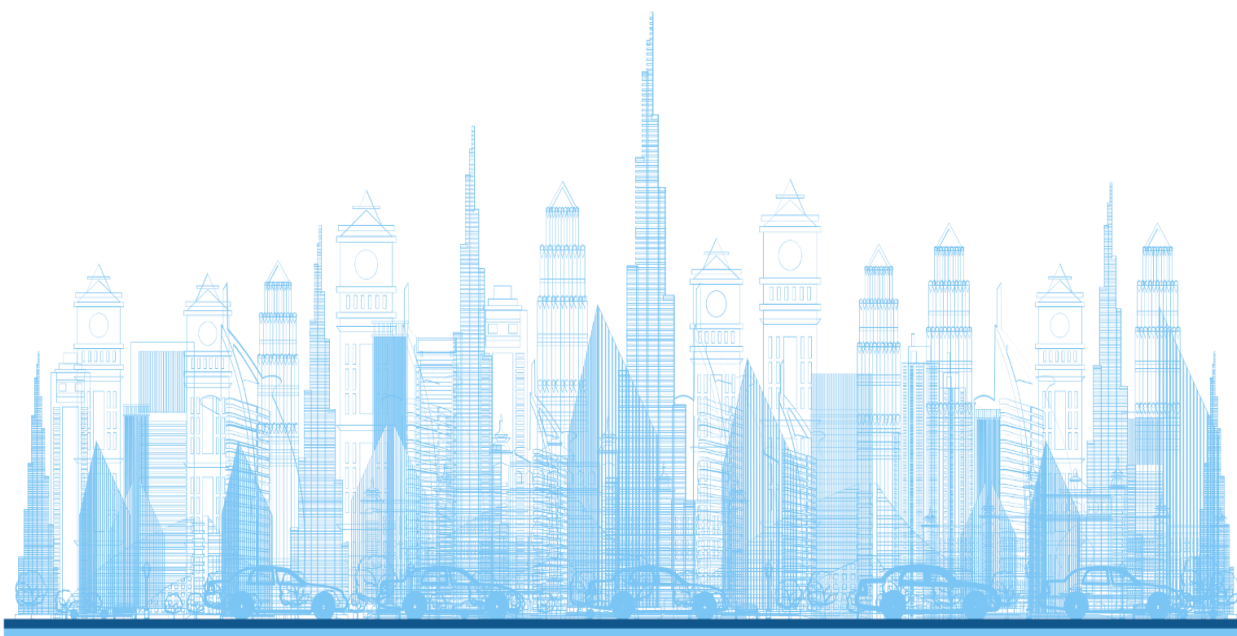


In the context of schools and education, addressing the issues of clean and dirty racism necessitates a shift in how we view human interactions and behaviours. Schools are microcosms of society and serve as critical spaces where attitudes and beliefs are shaped. If we are to make meaningful progress, educators must interrogate the implicit biases and systemic norms that reinforce these hierarchies within the classroom and broader school environment. This requires cultivating an ethos of self-reflection, open dialogue, and critical engagement with issues of race and equity. By recognising the behaviours and interactions that perpetuate exclusion, schools can move beyond superficial measures and commit to meaningful cultural change. Only through this collective effort can we begin to dismantle the ingrained inequalities that hinder societal progress and ensure that educational institutions become inclusive spaces for all.

Applying Anti-Racist Education in the UAE Context

Anti-racist education is vital in preparing educators to meet the challenges of teaching in a multicultural and multi-ethnic environment. Professor Vini Lander (2014) emphasises the importance of racial literacy in shaping equitable educational experiences, advocating for teacher training that goes beyond surface-level measures to address systemic inequities. Lander (2021) further argues that embedding anti-racist pedagogies within professional development requires a sustained commitment to equity and justice, rather than tokenistic efforts.

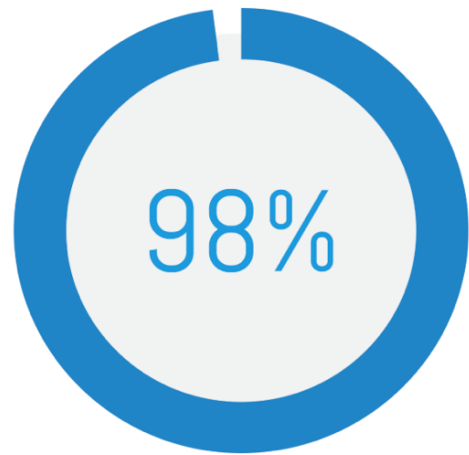
At GEMS Metropole School, the integration of these principles into staff development ensures that all students feel represented and valued. This proactive approach aligns with the UAE's broader commitment to diversity and tolerance, cultivating a school culture that reflects the interconnected global society. Educators are encouraged to critically evaluate their own positionalities, enabling them to challenge biases and create equitable learning environments. By prioritising these practices, the school not only supports the UAE's national vision but also equips its community to thrive in an increasingly globalised world.



Data and Findings

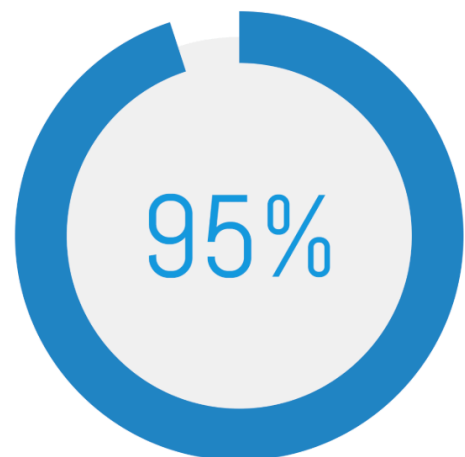
1. Did the session increase your understanding of how race and racism impact society and education?

98% said 'Yes'



2. Do you feel more aware on how to recognise issues of race and racism in your teaching or professional role?

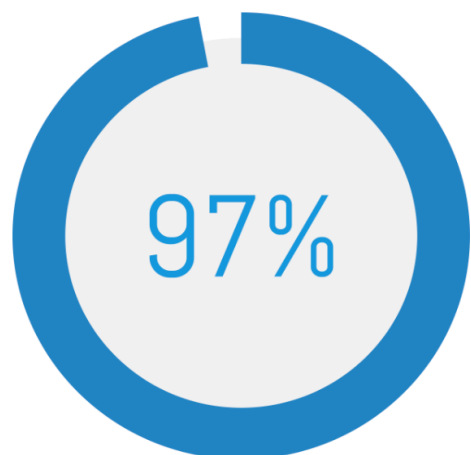
95% said 'Yes'



3. Do you believe it is important to engage in learning, discussions, and conversations about racism within the school or educational context?

97% said 'Yes'

(with further feedback/comments below)



The Importance of Staff Feedback in DEI Initiatives

The professional development sessions were met with overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, who appreciated the opportunity to engage in critical and meaningful discussions about race, racism, and equity. Many staff members commended the training for its relevance and practical application, noting its impact on their awareness and professional growth. Participants expressed that the sessions encouraged them to reflect deeply on their own practices and biases, helping them better understand the complexities of promoting an inclusive environment within the school.

"To create more awareness of current day situations and how they can affect everyone. Racism could be on a unconscious level and discussing it can identify where it is affecting people's behaviour and allow them to adjust their views".



Race, Racism and Society Survey 2024

"It is something that each one of us need to constantly educate and reinforce this practice, because sometimes even the people who are educated they unintentionally can even show some signs of racism or even face it. So it's very important to educate oneself and the others as well on this".



Race, Racism and Society Survey 2024

"It is important because it is still present within the school and it helps raise awareness and make others think twice before assuming or saying something which can be racist".



Race, Racism and Society Survey 2024

"Develop staff awareness of the issues, highlight the issues in our school, explore ways to reduce the issues in our school".



Race, Racism and Society Survey 2024

Such feedback aligns with research on the impact of professional development in both the UK and UAE education sectors. A report by the Education Policy Institute (2020) highlighted that high-quality professional development significantly enhances teacher confidence and improves pupil outcomes. Similarly, Sleiman (2020) highlights the importance of systematic training in UAE schools, noting that initiatives focusing on equity and inclusion empower educators to create learning environments that address the diverse needs of students. This positions GEMS Metropole School as a leader in its commitment to equipping staff with the knowledge and tools necessary to build a more inclusive school culture.

Lack of Training in Addressing Racism in Schools

Research highlights a significant gap in teacher training related to discussions about racism. According to The Independent (2022), a staggering 90% of staff in UK schools reported that they had not received adequate training to discuss or address racism effectively. This lack of preparation not only leaves teachers ill-equipped to handle sensitive conversations but also perpetuates systemic inequalities by failing to challenge biases within the classroom. Without proper training, educators may avoid addressing racism altogether, thereby missing crucial opportunities to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

A recent article in The Guardian highlights a concerning trend: schools and colleges in England are accused of failing in their legal duty to tackle racism, with many institutions lacking comprehensive anti-racism training for staff (Adams, 2024). This deficiency leaves educators inadequately equipped to address and challenge racist behaviours and attitudes within educational settings. Research from the University of Manchester also supports this, showing that anti-racist pedagogies remain underdeveloped in teacher training programmes, leaving many educators feeling unprepared to integrate these approaches into their classroom practice (Griffin, 2020).

The UAE has long championed tolerance and inclusivity; however, scholarly research highlights a gap in equipping teachers to navigate the complexities of multicultural and multiracial classrooms effectively. For instance, Al Khatib and Karaman (2017) stress the importance of integrating multicultural education into UAE classrooms to address implicit biases and ensure inclusivity. Similarly, Sleiman (2020) highlights the need for systematic teacher training in private schools to promote equity and counteract discriminatory practices.

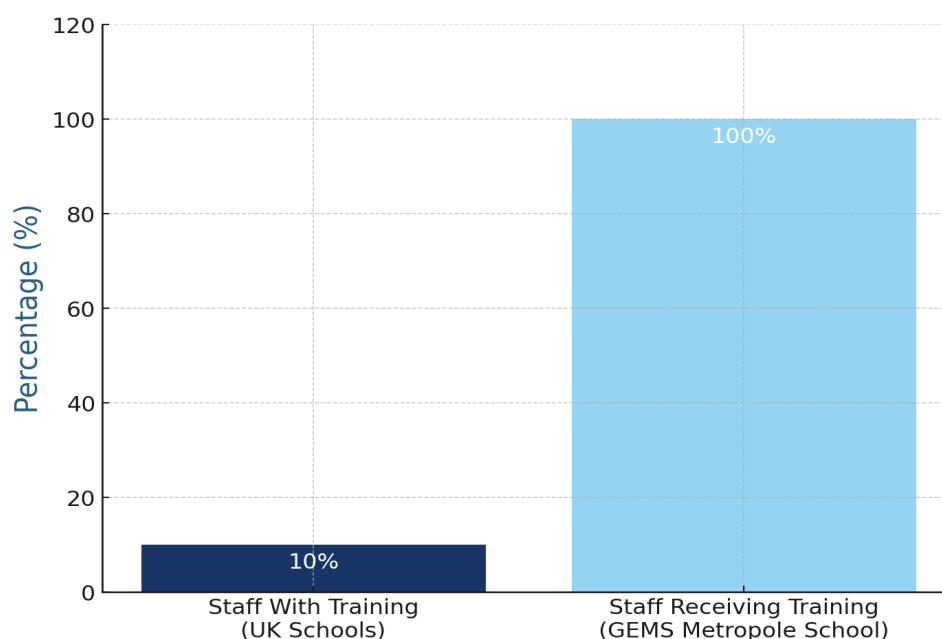


Recognising this, GEMS Metropole School is proactively addressing these issues by raising staff awareness through dedicated professional development sessions on race and racism. By initiating these essential conversations, the school is not only aligning with national values of tolerance but also taking significant steps toward creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. The importance of this approach is underscored by findings in *The Independent* (2022), which revealed that 90% of teachers in UK schools reported having no training to discuss racism. This lack of preparation not only hampers teachers' ability to address racism effectively but also perpetuates systemic inequalities within educational settings.

At GEMS Metropole School, where many staff members are from the UK, this training is especially vital in equipping educators with the tools to navigate the diverse cultural and social dynamics of the UAE. As Sleeter (2017) emphasises, teachers often lack the cultural awareness needed to effectively engage with students and colleagues from diverse backgrounds, which can hinder their ability to foster inclusive learning environments. Structured anti-racism training ensures that educators are better prepared to build meaningful connections with their students and collaborate effectively with colleagues, regardless of differing cultural experiences.

The table below illustrates the stark contrast between UK schools, where most staff remain untrained, and GEMS Metropole School, which has ensured 100% of its educators receive anti-racism training. This proactive stance not only positions the school as a leader in advancing inclusivity but also sets a benchmark for institutions in both the UK and the UAE. By addressing systemic inequities and embedding inclusivity into its professional development programme, GEMS Metropole School is shaping a culture of equity and belonging within its community.

Comparison of Anti-Racism Training: UK Schools vs. GEMS Metropole School



Community Engagement and Collaboration

Building an inclusive school environment requires the active involvement of students, parents, and the wider community. At GEMS Metropole School, this collaborative effort is supported through initiatives like the Community Engagement Session hosted by the Al Noor Centre for Culture and Heritage. This session extended an open invitation to parents from across the school community, encouraging diverse voices to participate. It served as a platform to explore themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion, offering valuable insights into the school's DEI journey. By advancing dialogue and collective action, these sessions strengthen the school's shared commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable culture.

Research by Epstein (2011) emphasises that schools with strong family and community partnerships experience higher levels of student achievement and well-being. By engaging parents as active contributors and ambassadors in this journey, we aim to strengthen our collective commitment to equity and inclusion. The insights gained from these sessions will play a pivotal role in shaping future initiatives, ensuring that our DEI work reflects the needs and aspirations of the entire school community.

A Call to Action: How you can get involved

Our DEI journey is a collective effort that requires the active participation of all members of the GEMS Metropole School community. We invite staff, parents, and students to join us by attending workshops, participating in focus groups, and engaging in the activities hosted by our Al Noor Centre for Culture and Heritage. These sessions will continue to explore themes such as cultural awareness, understanding unconscious bias, and celebrating diversity.

If you have any suggestions or ideas for future sessions, we encourage you to reach out to our DEEI Lead:

Yassar Hussain

Email: y.hussain_mts@gemsedu.com

Alternatively, you can contact:

Sheikh Mohammed Makda

Email: m.makda_mts@gemsedu.com

We are always looking for ways to improve and expand our initiatives. Your input can help us shape next year's professional development calendar, ensuring it addresses the needs of our community. Additionally, we are open to collaborating with external agencies to deliver specialised sessions for parents, staff, and students, creating a stronger, more inclusive school environment.

Inclusive Culture Rooted in Shared Values

At GEMS Metropole School, our commitment to creating an inclusive school culture reflects values that resonate deeply with the UAE's ethos of tolerance and respect for diversity. The Year of Tolerance (2019) serves as a national reminder of the importance of unity and coexistence in building strong communities. Drawing from these principles, we align our efforts with a shared vision of equity and mutual respect, enabling a learning environment that embraces everyone.

Central to this vision are the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who stated:

“An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab. A white person has no superiority over a black person, nor does a black person have any superiority over a white person, except by piety and good action”.



Hadith, Sahih Muslim

By weaving these principles into our approach, GEMS Metropole School is empowering its stakeholders to become active contributors to a more inclusive future. From tailored professional development for educators to community engagement initiatives, our efforts extend beyond individual classrooms, encompassing parents and the wider school community. These steps ensure that every member of the GEMS Metropole School community feels seen, valued, and empowered to contribute to a collective sense of belonging.

This emphasis on inclusion prepares our school community not only to succeed in a diverse and interconnected world but also to serve as a model for what an equitable and inclusive learning environment can achieve.



Summarising findings and moving forward

The professional development sessions delivered in Term 1 marked a pivotal step in GEMS Metropole School's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) journey. These sessions provided a platform to address systemic inequities within education, drawing on the findings of last year's DEI report, which identified critical areas for improvement. They encouraged meaningful dialogue among staff, creating opportunities for self-reflection, trust-building, and collaboration - essential foundations for cultivating a sense of belonging for all members of the school community.

While this initiative represents a significant milestone, it is only the beginning of a broader effort to confront the complexities of race and systemic inequities. The engagement and commitment demonstrated by staff throughout the sessions underscore a collective dedication to fostering an inclusive and equitable school culture.

Continuing the Journey: Addressing Microaggressions and Promoting Inclusivity in Term 2

Building on the momentum of Term 1, the focus in Term 2 will shift to understanding and addressing microaggressions. These subtle yet harmful behaviours can undermine inclusivity and perpetuate bias. By equipping educators with practical tools to recognise and respond to microaggressions effectively, this phase will further enhance the inclusive environment at GEMS Metropole School.

Aligned with the UAE's national values of tolerance and inclusion, as outlined in Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2023, this next step reinforces the school's commitment to combating discrimination and promoting coexistence. By embedding anti-racist education into professional development programmes, the school prepares both staff and students to thrive in an interconnected world.

Crucially, this journey extends beyond staff, encompassing parents, stakeholders, and the wider school community. Engagement from all members of the GEMS Metropole School community is vital to promoting a culture of equity and belonging, ensuring that everyone is empowered to contribute to this shared goal. While much has been accomplished, the journey is ongoing, and the commitment to continuous growth remains steadfast.



Glossary of Terms

1. **Anti-Racism Training** – A proactive approach aimed at identifying, challenging, and transforming values, behaviours, and policies that perpetuate systemic racism. It equips individuals with tools to recognise and address biases.
2. **Critical Race Theory (CRT)** - A framework that examines how racism is embedded in societal structures, policies, and practices. CRT highlights systemic inequities and the need for structural change in institutions (Gillborn, 2008).
3. **DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)** - A framework focused on creating environments where diverse individuals feel valued (diversity), have equal opportunities (equity), and experience a sense of belonging and respect (inclusion).
4. **Helms' White Racial Identity Model** - A psychological model outlining six stages of racial identity development, designed to help individuals reflect on their racial awareness and biases (Helms, 1990).
5. **Interest Convergence** - A concept from CRT introduced by Derrick Bell that asserts racial progress is most likely to occur when it aligns with the interests of dominant groups (Bell, 1980).
6. **Intersectionality** - A concept by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) describing how overlapping identities - such as race, gender, and class - create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege.
7. **Macpherson Report** - A 1999 UK report following the murder of Stephen Lawrence, which introduced the concept of institutional racism and called for systemic change in public institutions (Macpherson, 1999).
8. **Microaggressions** - Everyday subtle, often unintentional, acts of discrimination or bias towards marginalised groups. These interactions reinforce inequities and exclusion.
9. **Racial Literacy** - The ability to understand, identify, and effectively respond to racial dynamics in interpersonal and structural contexts, promoting equity and inclusion (Lander, 2014).
- 10.10. **Systemic Racism** - Institutional policies and practices that perpetuate racial inequalities, often unintentionally, operating at a structural rather than individual level.

11. **Tolerance and Inclusivity** - Core UAE values aligning with initiatives like the Year of Tolerance (2019) and Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2023, aimed at promoting harmony and diversity in education and society.
12. **Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2023** - UAE legislation focused on combating discrimination, hatred, and extremism, providing a legal framework for promoting inclusivity and coexistence.
13. **Al Noor Centre for Culture and Heritage** - An initiative by GEMS Metropole School that engages students, staff, and parents in activities promoting cultural awareness and inclusivity, aligning with the school's DEI vision and UAE Values.

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