



# BLACK BRITISH HISTORY IN OUR CURRICULUM

*'Black history is a series of missing chapters from British history'*

*David Olusoga*

# INTRODUCTION

Too little attention is given to the black and multi-ethnic aspects of British history. The teaching of black history is often confined to topics about slavery and post-war immigration or to Black History Month. The effect, if inadvertent, is to undervalue the overall contribution of black and minority ethnic people to Britain's past and to ignore their cultural, scientific and many other achievements.

Our focus on what it is to be Black and British, goes further than our History curriculum; it permeates our school culture.

Our Aim is:

1. To provide a sense of belonging and support positive racial identity development in our children from black background
2. To teach a Black British history curriculum that gives children an understanding of the important contribution of black and minority ethnic people to Britain's past

## 1. To provide a sense of belonging and support positive racial identity development in our children from black background: Implementation

Dr. Aisha White, is the Director of the Positive Racial Identity Development in Early Childhood programme at the University of Pittsburgh, USA. She writes that:

*All of us receive powerful messages about race and our racial identity all the time, messages that can significantly affect how we think and feel about ourselves and others. All this may be especially true for Black children living in a racialised country.*

At Nascot Wood Junior School, we recognize the importance of every child developing a sense of self and understanding of identity and the important part that we play in shaping their experience.

We also recognize the particular challenges of being part of a minority group and how this can affect interaction with the majority. The school environment needs to be carefully considered to ensure that it operates inclusively and doesn't encourage unconscious bias.

It is important to us that the children take pride in their background and ethnicity, and this is encouraged in a culture of value and respect.

We are committed to ensuring that we take every opportunity to provide the children with positive role models from backgrounds like theirs. For example, we actively source images for our smartboard plans that include people from black background.

We take care to ensure that children from black backgrounds are represented at every important school event and are given the encouragement to hold high office, for example, our Head Girl and prefects have come from BME backgrounds over the past four years.

Our Remembrance Assembly for the last two years, has focused on the importance of remembering the part played by soldiers from commonwealth countries in defending our democratic way of life.

We have the highest aspirations for all our children, and rigorously monitor the achievement of our BME pupils to ensure that they achieve the highest possible standards. We recognize that this high achievement is an important factor in determining future life chances.

At the heart of what we do is a determination to work in close partnership with parents, to ensure that we are listening, understanding and responding to their priorities and their challenges to our ways of thinking.

## 2. To teach an accessible educational Black British history curriculum that raises attainment for young people: Implementation

There are four main ways in which we propose to thread Black British history through our curriculum:

### i. A thematic approach.

Although this is a history document the reach is far further as Black history and achievement will permeate through all areas of the curriculum.

### ii. Chronological Historical Events

Through looking at key historical events, such as Roman soldiers being drawn from all over North African and Europe.

### iii. Examine Key Individuals

Through an examination of key individuals such as Mary Seacole, Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela and Dianne Abbott.

### iv. Literature

Through having a range of remarkable stories featuring ethnic minorities.

# Planning:

## i. Thematic Approach

Referencing the document 'Our Curriculum' we have devised an approach to teaching the foundation subject curriculum, including the Black British curriculum, which combines both thematic and discreet teaching. These themes encourage contextualization, making sense of learning and are relevant to the children. We have found that this approach awakens interest, engagement and a passion for learning, because it feels purposeful and ignites their curiosity.

## ii. Chronological Historical Events (possible lesson plans)

In planning for the delivery of this part of the curriculum in KS2, it is important teachers add depth to the History Curriculum that we already follow, below are examples of lessons that consider Black British contributions in our history.

## Year 3 Example

Cheddar man is the oldest skeleton found in Britain.

- His skeleton was found in Gough's cave, near the village of Cheddar in Somerset.
- He lived 10000 years ago, also called the Stone Age and he died a violent death.
- Using science, we can get an idea of what he looked like. He had dark skin but we do not know where he came from or that he was of African origin.

## Year 4 Example

African people were part of the Roman Empire.

- Some African people came to Britain as soldiers and generals.
- There is evidence of African soldiers being stationed at Hadrian's Wall in Cumbria.

## Year 5 Example

### An African Abbot in Anglo-Saxon England

- One of the Africans to live in Anglo-Saxon England was a man known as Hadrian (d. 709).
- The abbot of St Peter's and St Paul's at Canterbury, who played a pivotal role in the development of church structures in what is now England.

## Year 6

### Jacques Francis: The Salvage Diver

- Jacques was born in the 1520's off the West coast of Africa.
- In 1545, England and France began fighting; Henry VIII built a great warship called the Mary Rose which sank in the harbour of Portsmouth before doing any fighting.
- Henry wanted the guns and weapons off the sunken ship which would have totalled about 2 million pounds in today's money!



### iii. Examine Key Individuals

Class Teachers will delve into the study of key individuals throughout history, making a clear link between these individuals and their power and influence.

Each classroom will have a copy of:

- Vashti Harrison's *Bold Women in Black History* (Puffin Books, 2018) documents the phenomenal strides made by British Black women over time and across a range of areas of life. Figures profiled include Seaman William Brown born in 1794, a woman who disguised herself as a man to join the British Royal Navy, singer Shirley Bassey, politician Diane Abbott, heptathlete Tessa Sanderson, community activist Olive Morris, novelist Zadie Smith and boxer Nicola Adams.
- Vashti Harrison's *Exceptional Men in Black History* (Puffin Books 2019) in this book, you'll meet 35 pioneering black men who defied obstacles to pursue their dreams and change people's lives. Doctor Harold Moody. Diplomat Kofi Annan. Activist Paul Stephenson. Architect Sir David Adjaye.
- *Black and British: A Short, Essential History* by David Olusoga. An introduction to 1800 years of Black British history from Roman Africans who guarded Hadrian's Wall right up to present day, illustrated throughout with maps, photos and portraits
- *Young, Gifted and Black* by Jamia Wilson, 'Meet 52 Black Heroes from Past and Present', this book highlights 'the talent and contributions of black change-makers from around the world' as Jamia Wilson says in her introduction. They include achievers in a wide range of areas including politics, the arts and sport.
- *Timelines in Black History: Leaders, Legends, Legacies* (Dorling Kindersley 2020)

#### iv. Literature (both fiction and non-fiction)

Books provide an invaluable stimulus to frame and springboard these areas of study and support teachers in making such study an embedded part of the year round provision. The Reflecting Realities reports which review the extent and quality of ethnic minority presence in children's literature have highlighted the extent of under-representation.

At NWJS, we will begin to examine key individuals through the Scholastic Voices series which gives children the opportunity to delve into remarkable stories featuring interesting and strong Black, Asian and minority ethnic leads. These books contribute to a much needed series that profiles and spotlights Black and minority ethnic presence across British history.

#### Year 3:

Voices 6: Two Sisters: A Story of Freedom. In this heart-stopping adventure based on real historical events, Kereen Getten takes readers on a journey of sisterhood, struggle and survival from Jamaica to Britain.

#### Year 4:

Voices 4: Empire's End - A Roman Story (linked to history topic). A gripping Roman adventure told by a young North African girl who sets out on a danger-filled journey to Britain.

## Year 5:

Voices 3: Son of the Circus - A Victorian Story. A Victorian Story explores the life of a young mixed-race boy, Ted, living with his mother and poorly older brother in Victorian Bradford.

Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race by Margot Lee Shetterly. In this illustrated picture book edition, we explore the story of four female African American mathematicians at NASA, known as "colored computers," and how they overcame gender and racial barriers to succeed in a highly challenging STEM-based career.

## Year 6:

Voices 2: Diver's Daughter: A Tudor Story (linked to history topic). A gripping heart-in-your-mouth adventure told by Eve and her mother, who was stolen from her family in Mozambique as a child, from the Southwark slums of Elizabethan London to England's southern coast.