

COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Date:	Wednesday, 25 October 2000
Time:	2.00pm
Venue:	Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

Title: NOTE OF MEETING OF STEPHEN LAWRENCE STEERING GROUP, 13 SEPTEMBER 2000**Present**

Helen Mary Jones, AM (Chair)

Richard Edwards, AM

Gareth Jones, AM

David Melding, AM

Kirsty Williams, AM

Alan Lansdown, Pupil Support Division

Charles Willie, Equality Policy Unit

Julie Bragg, Committee Secretariat

1. Alan Lansdown reported on progress at the working group of officials. An action plan was being drawn up by the group to take forward the education recommendations of the MacPherson report. The group would meet during week commencing 25 September to finalise the plan which should be available in draft around the middle of October. The Meeting is however proving difficult to re-arrange.

2. There would be three main areas in the plan:

- achieving flexibility within the PSE framework to reflect the recommendations;
- recording of racist incidents in schools. There was a feeling that numbers may not be accurately recorded particularly in instances of bullying when the reasons why they were occurring were not analysed. Reporting systems were not sufficient regarding the extent of incidents and any remedial action taken;
- extending the role of Estyn to take into account what and how they monitor actions in schools.

3. Members queried the fact that the police were advising on racial matters in schools. Alan advised that the police were becoming increasingly involved in schools in general and what they were doing regarding race issues would dovetail with what the Assembly and the group were doing and proposing should be done. Charles Willie informed the group that the police were mainly providing information and materials to schools which they had developed on their own to date. These were now being developed with the working group and would be subject to their approval. The Finance Secretary had allocated funds to assist in their production. Alan proposed writing to Superintendent Murray to ask her to bring in a sample of the materials available and to discuss how to co-ordinate the role of the group with that of the police.

ACTION: Alan Lansdown.

4. A query was raised as to how the action plan addressed curriculum issues across the board rather than solely in PSE. The steering group expected all subject areas to touch on race matters and had given examples of how previously. However, PSE was a good starting point.

5. Members commented that training for teachers was vital but teaching unions were not represented on the steering group. They reiterated the point that the right atmosphere needed to be created in the classroom and plans would fail if teachers didn't understand how or why to implement them. Schools are not required to report on how they incorporate race matters in teaching and embedding them across the curriculum was a way in which the inspection framework can follow what is happening. However, their 5 to 6 year inspection framework was too long. It might be appropriate to ask LEAs to take on a timetable more reflective of the need to ensure racial matters were being considered in schools now. They could start with key schools where there were known difficulties. There was no point in convincing teachers to take these issues on board if the LEAs didn't do so also. The Chair proposed seeking the view of full Equality Committee as to whether to invite the teaching unions to be represented on the group or to consult them. **ACTION: Committee Secretariat to note and table at the next formal committee meeting.**

6. On the issue of training, Alan Lansdown advised that a recommendation could be made in the action plan, but he would need to be sure that there was funding within the GEST programme to fund it. At the moment INSET training providers were not represented on the group. He would also need to ascertain how equality training was currently provided. **ACTION: Alan Lansdown to check GEST budget and provision of training.**

7. Alan queried the timescale over which members considered it acceptable to implement the recommendations as the Assembly Secretary for Education and Children wished to discuss the way forward with ACCAC. Members felt implementation would need to be negotiated. It might be appropriate to target early years provision initially as younger children would feed through the school system. 'Remedial' action could be taken regarding older pupils. ACCAC's advice could be sought on how and when to implement the various changes, although small changes, such as changing set texts in English or studying Somalia in Geography and relating it to the Welsh population, could have a big impact immediately.

8. Another dimension to consider was the relationship between ACCAC and QCA relating to standards. There are general and subject specific criteria to which A level and GCSE examinations have to conform. If equality is not incorporated into the basic criteria then it will be impossible to get it embedded. This area could also usefully be discussed with ACCAC.

9. The Chair suggested proposing a three strand approach for the Equality Committee's approval:

- quick hits involving minor changes to the curriculum;
- a focus on early years;
- more complicated issues which are not as easy to build in or where the materials do not currently exist.

ACTION: Committee Secretariat to note and table at the next formal committee meeting.

10. Charles Willie updated the group on the work of Roger MacKenzie, the secondee from the PCS union. He had met a number of Assembly officials to establish an outline of the specific issues being considered by the Committee and had met ethnic communities in Wales to ascertain what their concerns are. He would have a series of engagements with other officials including the Permanent Secretary during the second half of September to define exactly what he would do. He was in the process of refining his terms of reference to reflect his findings and would be producing an interim report to be tabled at the next formal committee meeting.

ACTION: Committee Secretariat to note.

Committee Secretariat

September 2000

